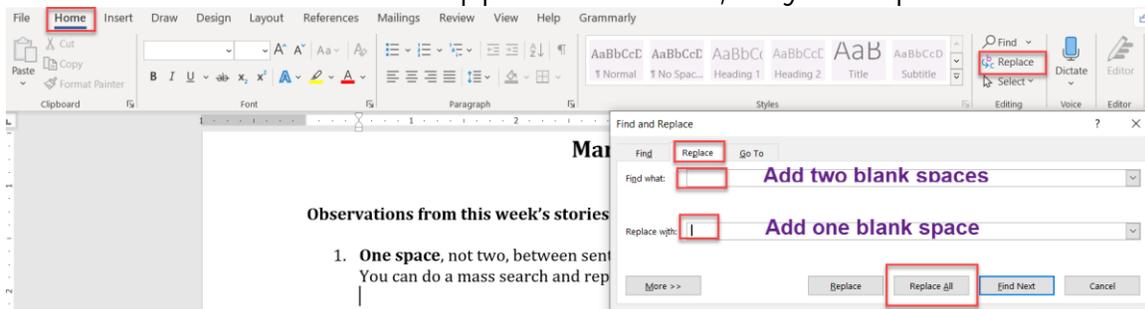


## Story Notes based on Norma Beasley's story, "Thought, Will, Action"

1. **Create a personal editing checklist.** Use these story notes as a basis to build a personal editing checklist. Add other items you often overlook and use these sheets to check your future stories *before* submitting them for review. Included a blank editing checklist that you can fill in and add to.
2. **One space**, not two, between sentences, always and forever, since well before the 1990s. You can do a mass search and replace using the MS Word *replace* feature. The same rule also applies to a colon, only one space after the colon.



3. **Compound words.** Check compound words to see if they are two separate words, hyphenated, or one word—*backyard*, *front yard*, *in-depth*. You can type the word(s) in question into an online search engine followed by the words *Merriam* and *Webster* to see the current status of such words or phrases.
4. **Footnotes.** Footnotes can be used casually to give readers information that supplements but is not part of the story. The goal of footnotes in non-academic writing is to ensure readers can locate the article, book, website, etc., referenced should they want to know more. Information provided in the footnote should include the name of the periodical or website used, but it should also provide specific details as to the volume/edition, date of publication, unique URL, etc. This avoids confusion when one author may have several bylines in the same magazine or website.
5. **Serial or Oxford comma.** The comma before the conjunction in a list of three or more items is called the serial or Oxford comma. Even though other style guides omit it, in creative writing, it is suggested we use it for clarity.

*France's flag is blue, white, and red.* (Clear)

*I love my parents, Lady Gaga and John F. Kennedy.* (Unclear)

- 6. Commas.** Using the Oxford comma and a comma before a conjunction joining two independent clauses is grammatically correct. However, many authors choose *not* to follow those rules. If you elect *not* to adhere to those conventions, make sure you do it consistently. If you use the comma sometimes and not others, you look like you don't know the proper usage. With commas, consistency is key.
- 7. Epigraphs.** An epigraph is a quotation that pertains to but is not integral to the text that follows. It often appears at the beginning of a book and sometimes, at the start of chapters. Usually, epigraphs are displayed without quotation marks with the author and source on a line below the quote.

Experience is an author's most valuable asset; experience is the thing that puts the muscle and the breath and warm blood into the book he writes.

"Is Shakespeare Dead?" 1909 essay, published in *What Is Man? and Other Essays*

God only exhibits his thunder and lightning at intervals, and so they always command attention. These are God's adjectives. You thunder and lightning too much; the reader ceases to get the bed by and by.  
—Mark Twain, 1878 letter to his brother Orion

- 8. Family member's titles as names.** When writing about a family member *without* attributing a possessive pronoun (*my, your, hers, his, our, their*) or other designation, capitalize Mom, Dad, Grandpa, Aunt Rose, etc. *Grandma Donna is my dad's mom, Uncle Jim's stepmom, and my cousins' and my favorite grandmother.*
- 9. OK, okay.** Both versions are correct. I recommend *okay* because it is a word, and I find the capital letters give a less important word too much significance.