A Writer's Checklist

- ❑ Let the material rest for a while.
- ❑ Read the manuscript aloud.
- ❑ Read the manuscript objectively.
- ❑ Get the first words right.

Eliminate

- ❑ Nonessentials
- ❑ Irrelevancies
- ❑ Redundancies
- ❑ Obvious statements
- ❑ Meaningless words
- ❑ Unneeded words
- ❑ Repetitive words
- ❑ Absolutes (unless you mean without exception)
- ❑ Clichés
- ❑ Christianese
- ❑ Circumlocutions *
- ❑ Purple prose writing
- ❑ Purple prose punctuation
- ❑ Preaching

Check

- ❑ Spelling, punctuation, and grammar
- ❑ Consistency
- ❑ Logical order
- ❑ Transitions
- ❑ Facts and quotes, including Scripture

Other

- ❑ Add missing support, definitions, etc.
- ❑ Use active verbs and picture nouns.
- ❑ Prefer the active voice, avoid the passive voice.
- ❑ Show, don't tell (whenever possible).
- ❑ Choose the best words.
- ❑ Vary sentence structure and length.
- ❑ Use short words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- ❑ Take advantage of great resources for writers.
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑

*Speaking of circumlocutions, use words that people know.

Spelling

The standard dictionary used by editors and publishers—

> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition*

Here are a few commonly misspelled or misused words. Keep in mind that spellcheck doesn't always catch incorrectly used words.

> *Foreword* (This is used at the beginning of a book. It's often confused with *forward*.)

> *Acknowledgments* (The UK version is often spelled with an internal *e*, but the US version hasn't used the *e* since Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary.)

> *Toward/Towards*, *Backward/Backwards*, *Downward/Downwards*, *Heavenward/Heavenwards*, *Upward/Upwards*, and so forth (The preferred version in the US is without the *s* at the end.)

> *Judgment* is the proper US spelling.

> *Its, It's   Your, You're   There, Their, They're   To, Too, Two*

> *Then, Than   Affect, Effect   Except, Accept*

> And so many more

Style

To ensure consistency in publishing, writers, editors, and publishers use style sheets and style guides.

The definitive style guide for publishing in the US—

> *The Chicago Manual of Style, Seventeenth Edition*
> Publisher: The University of Chicago Press
> www.chicagomanualofstyle.org (online version, must subscribe)

A supplement to *CMoS* for Christian writers and publishers—

> *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style, 4th Edition*
> Editor: Robert Hudson
> Publisher: Zondervan