Self-editing: getting it right
Macro concerns

- Keep your characters straight
  - Use spreadsheet to record names and characteristics
  - Introduce them at the proper time and in context
  - Unless they have a function, keep a character out that is not needed

- Check your historical facts
  - Watch anachronisms
  - Make certain sequencing is correct
  - Do not presume upon reader’s knowledge of history, as familiar as it may be to you.

- Make sure you have the proper flow to your storyline
  - Flashbacks should explain a character’s place or thought, not correct your flow
  - Everything need not be explained but should be logical
Macro Concerns

• Make sure you have the proper flow to your storyline
• Flashbacks should explain a character’s place or thought, not correct your flow
• Everything need not be explained but should be logical

• Hints to keep the reader engaged
• Does your chapter ending lead them to the next one?
• Length of chapters – keep in mind reader fatigue
Micro Concerns

• Strong start
• Show vs. tell
• Avoid piling on, restating and recasting to state same idea
• Destroy exclamation points!
• Understand difference of use between en dashes and em dashes
• Ellipses really should go away . . .
Words about words

• Reign in adverbs: action in verb/noun, not adverb
• Active vs. Passive: the Zombie test
• Perfect tenses vs. less perfect tenses
• Overused words: that and it
• Avoid the obvious
  • "Stage directions"
  • Redundant phrases: “He put his hat on his head”; “She sat down.”
Watch those wascally weasels (Angela Hunt)

- Overused words: just, very, rather, started to, began to, suddenly, there/was/were, some, and “of the”
- Words we have a personal tendency to overuse
- Words that weaken our writing
- Adverbs
- Use computer search/replace function
- When you find one, put it in caps, then replace with ""
Dialogue

- Eliminate attributions as much as possible.
- "Said" is a good word. Don’t get too cute.
- Watch impossibilities. “She gritted her teeth as she shouted.”
- Use body movements to convey communication. “Slamming fist” instead of “He was angry.”
Final Preparation

• First draft – get it out
• Second draft – repair the damage. Run grammar and spell check
• Third draft – use speech function on computer to hear the words
• Have your manuscript reviewed by people who will tell you the truth. Not your mother.
• Fourth draft incorporating or rejecting suggested edits
• Submit