



35 “Red-Flag” Words

that can block
you from getting
published!

How to:

- Find
- Mark
- Improve

7-page tutorial from [Molli Nickell](#)~



Get Published Now!

Is your Manuscript Ready for Prime Time?

Dear Writer,

Congratulations for making the decision to expend time and effort to self-edit your work and remove writing mechanic errors that can label you as a “rookie.” Yikes! No writer wants that!



This tutorial will help you:

- Identify “red-flag” weak words that lurk in your manuscript.
- Search—Mark—Revise and remove them.

What are writing mechanics?

This term refers to basic rules of grammar and language usage. You already know many of these like, “i” before “e” except after “c.” Or, never end a sentence a preposition with. Or, keep track of your modifiers so you don’t “throw momma from the train, a kiss.”

Except . . . and here’s the problem: if you’re unaware of writing mechanic rules, you constantly break them. This will identify your work as not being ready for prime time.

BTW: During the process of identifying and removing red-flags from your work, you become a *smarter* and more *skillful* writer which increases your potential to become a *published* author.

About the business~

Despite what you may have heard, agents are not wart-covered ogres who crouch over their keyboards, muttering “Mwaaaahaha,” as they punch their delete keys over and over and over and . . .



Agents are pragmatic business people who use their best judgment to acquire well-written manuscripts that can be polished, printed, and sold for a profit. Publishing, just like *every* business, must generate profits to survive.

Therefore, when a submission is filled with writing mechanic errors, the question arises, “Will it be cost effective to correct the grammar? Will this make the manuscript worthy of publication? The probable answer? “No.”

Save yourself from the stress of rejection. Become your own first line of defense. Self-evaluate your work, locate the red flags, and *revise* them *before* submission.

Revision~

Uh oh! The dreaded “R” word. Revision! Most writers cringe at the thought of scouring every page of their manuscripts to find and revise red-flag words and phrases. However, my “Search-Mark-Revise” technique makes this task doable.

Keep in mind that the process of revision usually involves re-writing a sentence or phrase, not just swapping one word for another.



Do these words proliferate in your manuscript?

that	the	which	when	then
just as	set	get	got	felt
feel	this	is	was	took
take	have	had	found	are
were	be	being	do	felt
thought	think	believe	place	put
could	would	should	try	like



Verbs that link “was” and “ing identify the writer as a “rookie.”

For example: The agent was scanning query letters. She was searching for a skillful writer with a saleable manuscript. Revised, it reads, “The agent scanned query letters as she searched for a skillful writer with a saleable manuscript.



Are you afflicted with comma karma which results in long involved sentences that ramble on and on without punctuation to separate sections or thoughts which forces the reader to go

over the sentence several times to figure out what the writer is trying to say and causes the question to arise as to whether the entire manuscript might filled with long and rambling sentences like this one and if so would it be time and cost effective to attempt to make the manuscript publication worthy?

When your manuscript contains run-together sentences, agents run away.



BEFORE you launch Search—Mark—Revise

Do not begin a learning curve on an original document. *FIRST*, make a backup copy. Protect yourself from catastrophe in case you mistakenly delete an entire chapter, lose your document due to a power outage or hard-drive crash, buffalo stampede, or attack by internet trolls.

Never begin a learning curve on an original document.

Never, ever, ever . . . EVER!

The process:

- Open your back-up copy (not your original).
- Click on Control and “F” to open Word’s Search Engine.
- To familiarize yourself with this Search—Mark—Revise system, begin with a common word that is certain to be found throughout your document.
Type “was” in the Search Document box.
- Word will tell you how many times “was” appears in your entire document.
- Click on the “Replace” feature in Word’s Search engine.
- Word will ask, “Replace with what?” Type WAS (all capital letters) in the search box. Then click on “Replace All.”
- WAS now stands out on every page where it appears.
- Because “was” often is paired with an “ing” verb, search for “ing.”
Then click on the “Replace” feature in Word’s search engine.
- Word will ask, “Replace with what?” Type ING (all capital letters) in the search box. Then click on “Replace All.”
- ING and WAS now stand out on every page where they appear.

When you feel comfortable with the process, open your original document and repeat Search—Mark—Revise to improve your manuscript.

BTW: Some writers prefer to work on one chapter at a time. Others mark their *entire* document with all the words and phrases to be changed. Then, they revise one chapter at a time.

NIFTY TRICK #1:

When you edit and revise sentences, you make errors. We all do. So, after you've revised a sentence or paragraph, highlight it in yellow and move on. In a day or two, revisit these highlighted passages. Read them *out loud* to help your inner editor *hear* your revision and make you aware of any errors. Correct these, then remove the highlighting.

NIFTY TRICK #2:

When you search for a word like “the,” you’ll discover it’s part of many words. Therefore, when you type “the” into Word’s Search Box, place a space *before* and *after* “the.” This directs Word to locate only “the” and not all words (like them or theme or therefore) where “the” also appears.

What red-flag words do you chronically overuse? Write them here:

Set a Search-Mark-Revise daily goal. Two or three pages? One chapter? Decide how much you can handle in one day, or a single writing session. Then, word by word, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, page by page, chapter by chapter, revise away as you mature the quality of your writing.

Your Next \$uccess \$tep:

Now it's time to craft a device-and-agent-friendly query that adheres to *new* industry standards. This query tutorial shows you how.

For less than the cost of a movie ticket, chemical-laced cola, and mystery-battered popcorn, expand your mind instead of your mid-section as you learn to:

- Follow the query template to guide you through your first draft.
- Identify three major mistakes that can doom your query quest.
- Apply free simple steps to ensure success.
- Double check your query to make sure nothing crucial has been omitted.



Check it out. [CLICK HERE](#)

The query letter is your first step toward becoming a published author. Just imagine how you'll feel on that magical day when you walk into Barnes and Noble. There's your book, flying off the "new releases" table. Kaching!

Write on.

May the Words be With You!

Molli

Molli Nickell, the Publishing Wizard

Since 1980, I've edited books, delivered keynotes, led workshops, and evaluated manuscripts for industry giants including . . .

