

Revision Checklist PDF

Comprehensive Editing Guide for Your Autobiography

How to Use This Checklist

- **First Pass:** Structural revision (big picture)
 - **Second Pass:** Content revision (scene development)
 - **Third Pass:** Line editing (language polish)
 - **Final Pass:** Formatting and proofreading
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Part 1: Structural Revision (The Big Picture)

Overall Narrative

- The beginning hooks the reader immediately
- The central purpose/theme is clear throughout
- The ending provides satisfying reflection/closure
- Pacing is varied (some fast summary, some slow scenes)
- Chronological order is clear (or intentional if non-chronological)
- Flashbacks are clearly signaled and necessary

Chapter Structure

- Each chapter has a clear focus and purpose
- Chapters flow logically from one to the next
- Chapter lengths are varied appropriately
- Chapter titles are meaningful (not just "Age 10–15")
- Each chapter advances the overall narrative

Balance & Proportion

- Important periods get more space; minor periods are summarized
 - Emotional highs and lows are balanced
 - Reflection balances action (not just “what happened” but “what it meant”)
 - Other people are portrayed fairly (not just villains or heroes)
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Part 2: Content Revision (Scene Development)

Character Portrayal

- You come across as a real, multidimensional person
- Other people are described with specificity (not just “my kind teacher”)
- Relationships evolve believably
- Dialogue sounds natural and serves a purpose
- People’s impact on you is clear

Scene Execution

- Key moments are shown in detail (not just summarized)
- Sensory details bring scenes to life (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste)
- Emotional experiences are conveyed through action/physical response
- Settings are described enough to orient the reader
- Transitions between scenes are smooth

Authenticity & Honesty

- Your voice sounds authentic (like you, not a textbook)
 - Vulnerable moments are included (not just successes)
 - You acknowledge uncertainty where memory is fuzzy
 - You take responsibility for your own actions
 - You avoid overly dramatic or self-congratulatory language
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Part 3: Thematic & Reflective Depth

Meaning-Making

- Each significant event includes reflection (what you learned/how you changed)
- Themes are developed consistently throughout
- Connections between past and present understanding are clear
- Insights feel earned (not tacked-on morals)

Universal Resonance

- Personal experiences connect to broader human experiences
- Readers can find points of identification
- Your story offers insight beyond just “what happened to me”
- The writing avoids being overly self-absorbed

Part 4: Language & Style Revision

Clarity & Precision

- Sentences are clear and easy to follow
- Word choices are precise (not vague)
- Technical terms are explained if necessary
- Phrases like “I think,” “I feel,” “it seems” are minimized

Style & Voice

- Sentence length is varied
- Paragraphs are a reasonable length (not wall-of-text)
- Voice is consistent throughout
- Tone matches the content (serious when appropriate, light when appropriate)

Show vs. Tell

- "Telling" statements are replaced with "showing" scenes where appropriate
 - Emotions are demonstrated through action/description
 - Character traits are shown through behavior
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Part 5: Technical & Mechanical Check

Grammar & Spelling

- Spell-check has been run (but also read manually)
- Grammar is correct (tense consistency, subject-verb agreement, etc.)
- Punctuation is correct, especially with dialogue
- Commonly confused words are checked (their/there, affect/effect, etc.)

Fact-Checking

- Dates are accurate (or acknowledged as approximate)
- Names are spelled correctly
- Historical events are referenced accurately
- Quotes are attributed correctly (or noted as approximate)

Formatting

- Consistent font and spacing throughout
 - Chapter titles formatted consistently
 - Page numbers included
 - Paragraph indentation consistent
 - Dialogue formatted correctly with new paragraphs for each speaker
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Part 6: Privacy & Ethical Review

Sensitivity

- Living people are portrayed fairly
- Names have been changed where appropriate
- Potentially hurtful information is necessary to the story
- You've considered the impact of sharing certain stories

Permissions

- You have permission for any letters, photos, or documents reproduced
 - Sensitive family stories have been discussed with affected members if appropriate
 - You're comfortable with everything you've included
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Part 7: Final Proofreading Pass

Read Aloud

- Read the entire manuscript aloud to catch awkward phrasing
- Listen for repetitive words or phrases
- Note where you stumble—those sentences need revision

Fresh Eyes

- Had someone else read it (at least parts)
- Taken a break of at least 48 hours before final read
- Printed a copy to read on paper (catches different errors)

Final Details

- Title page includes all necessary information
- Table of contents matches actual page numbers
- Acknowledgments are complete
- Dedication is included (if desired)

- Any epigraphs or quotes are properly formatted
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Revision Tracker

Chapter	Structural Edits	Content Edits	Line Edits	Completed
1	[]	[]	[]	[]
2	[]	[]	[]	[]
3	[]	[]	[]	[]
4	[]	[]	[]	[]
5	[]	[]	[]	[]
6	[]	[]	[]	[]

Final Step: Submission/Sharing Checklist

- Saved final version with date in filename (e.g., "MyAutobiography_Final_2025.pdf")
- Backed up file in at least two locations
- Shared with intended readers (if applicable)
- Submitted to teacher/publisher (if applicable)
- Celebrated completing your autobiography!