Five Simple Tips for Editing Your Own Work

➔ One key factor that separates mediocre writers from good ones (and even good from great) is the quality of their editing.

➔ It's hard to edit your own work. You might end up skipping editing altogether because you hate it – or you might spend hours trying to get a piece right.

#1: Don't Edit *While* You're Writing

❏ You've probably heard this one time and time again: don't stop to edit while you're writing. It's great advice, though many writers find it hard to stick to.

❏ It's fine to pause and correct a typo, or restart a sentence, while you're creating the first draft – but don't keep going back to delete whole sentences or paragraphs.

#2: Put Your Work Aside for a Few Days

❏ Try to build extra time into your writing schedule, so that you can let your work sit before editing.

❏ With a short piece like a blog post, a day away from it – or even a few hours – is enough. If you've written a whole novel, try to put it aside for at least a week or two before starting the editing process.

❏ **By doing this, you make it easier to see your work with fresh eyes -** which is how your audience will see it!

#3: Use Spell-Check – but Use Your Eyes Too

❏ Always run your work through a spell-checker. That might mean using a browser plugin, or simply writing in Word or another word processing program so that you can check for red wiggly lines.

❏ **Don't rely on spell-check to catch everything, though.** Some errors will slip through – missing words are a common one, as are *homophones* (words that sound the same but are spelt differently, like "which" and "witch").

❏ Sometimes, spell-check will pick up on words that are actually correct – for example "colour" may appear incorrect, as many spell checkers use American spelling.

#4: Read Your Piece Backwards (or Slowly)

❏ It's tough to proof-read your own writing: by this final stage of editing, you're so familiar with the words on the page that mistakes just slide past you. One trick for better proof-reading is to read backwards from the end of the piece.

❏ **If you find reading backwards too awkward, then try reading s-l-o-w-l-y.** That might mean running a pencil along each line as you read, or increasing the font size so that you don't see so many words at a time on your screen.

#5: Let it Go

❏ To edit well, you need to eventually stop! If you find yourself taking commas out and putting them back in, you're done! - It's time to put your work out into the world.

❏ **If you're like most writers, you'll never feel entirely confident about your work.** You'll have a nagging sense that it could still be better. But perfection is an unattainable target – so settle for good enough.