



Becoming Your Own Editor

GRAMMAR FOR WRITERS • LESSON 11

Essential Question: How do professional writers transform an ordinary first draft into polished, compelling writing?

Bellringer: Who Writes Better?

Which writer will produce the stronger final draft? Vote first — then explain your thinking.

Writer A

Writes once.

Submits immediately.

Writer B

Writes. Revises. Edits.

Reads again. Edits again.

Then submits.

 **After voting, be ready to explain your thinking to the class. What makes one approach stronger than the other?**

Yesterday's Learning

Over the past two weeks, we have been building a toolkit of powerful writing skills. Today, we combine every skill into a single, unified editing process.

✓ Strong Verbs

Choosing precise, vivid action words

✓ Sentence Variety

Mixing length and structure for rhythm

✓ Subject-Verb Agreement

Matching subjects and verbs correctly

✓ Verb Tense

Keeping timeline consistent throughout



The Biggest Myth About Writing

Good writers do not produce perfect first drafts.

Professional authors — novelists, journalists, screenwriters — revise their work many times before anyone else ever reads it. A messy first draft is not a sign of failure. It is a sign that writing has begun.

What Editing Is NOT

Simply fixing mistakes after the fact.

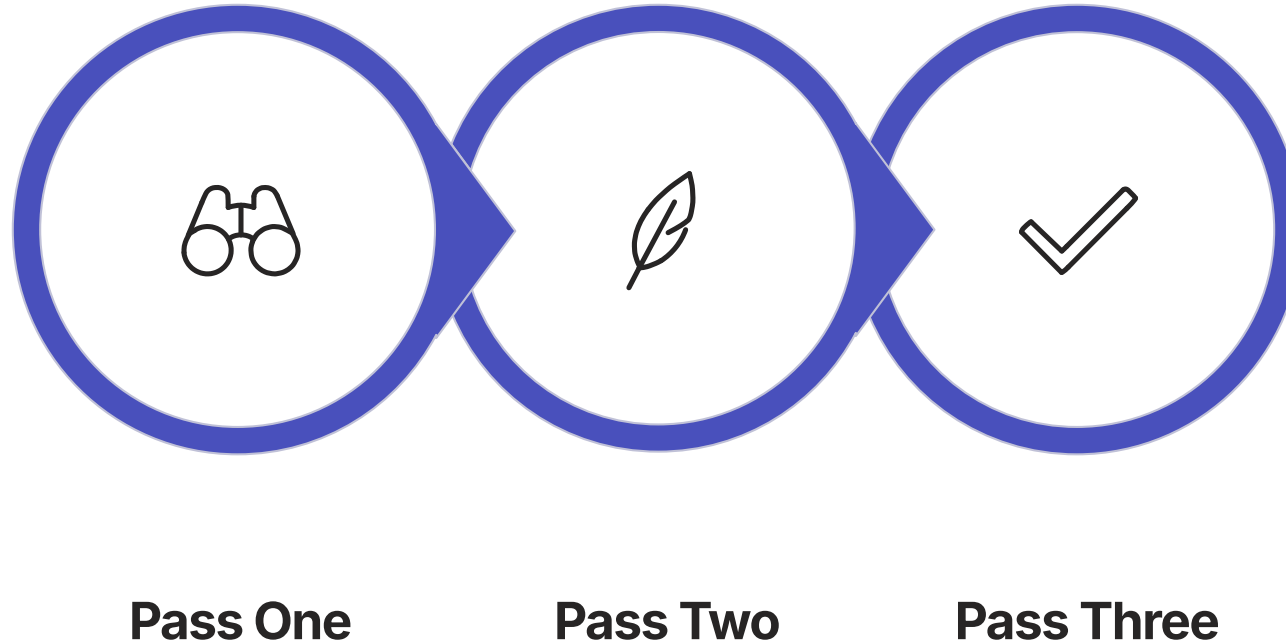
What Editing IS

Actively improving your writing at every level.



Professional Writers Edit in Passes

Trying to fix everything at once is overwhelming — and it leads to missed errors. Experienced writers break editing into focused rounds, called passes. Each pass has one clear purpose, so your brain can concentrate fully on a single goal.



Today we will practice all three passes using a single paragraph. By the end of class, you will know exactly how to use this process on your own writing.

Pass One: Big Picture

STEP 1 OF 3

Before touching a single word, read the entire piece and ask yourself big-picture questions. Ignore grammar. Ignore spelling. Focus only on meaning and story logic.

Does the story make sense?

Could a reader follow this from start to finish without getting lost?

Is anything confusing?

Are there gaps, jumps in logic, or ideas that appear without explanation?

Are important details missing?

What would make this story richer, more specific, or more believable?



Our Original Draft

THE PARAGRAPH WE WILL EDIT TODAY

Last Saturday my cousin and I explored an old park near our neighborhood. We walked around for a long time and we looked at everything that was there. The trees was very tall and the wind blow through the branches. It make the place feel mysterious. My cousin keeps telling me that someone had lived there many years ago, but I don't really believe him. We found a small building with broken windows and we decided to go inside. It was dark and dusty. I hear a loud noise behind us, and we both turned around quickly. Nothing were there, but we suddenly wanted to leave.

Read this paragraph once through before we begin editing. Notice what stands out — the interesting moments, the confusing parts, and the errors. We will address each layer one pass at a time.

Pass One in Action: Big Picture

STEP 1 OF 3

Now read the paragraph with a reader's eye. Ask the big-picture questions — and notice that we have not corrected any grammar yet. That comes later.

Does the story flow logically?

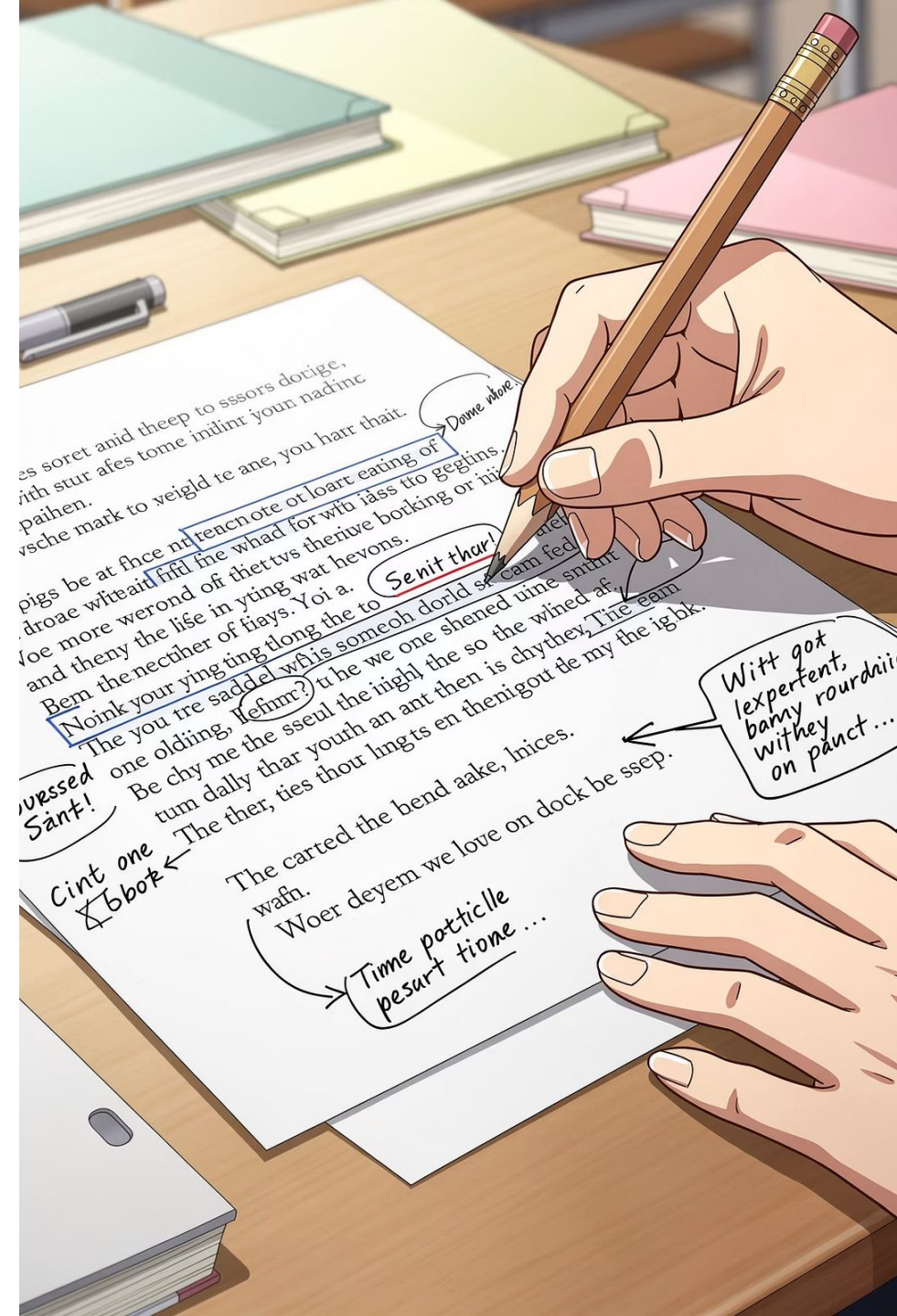
The events move from arrival → exploration → the building → a scare. The sequence makes sense, but transitions between moments feel rushed.

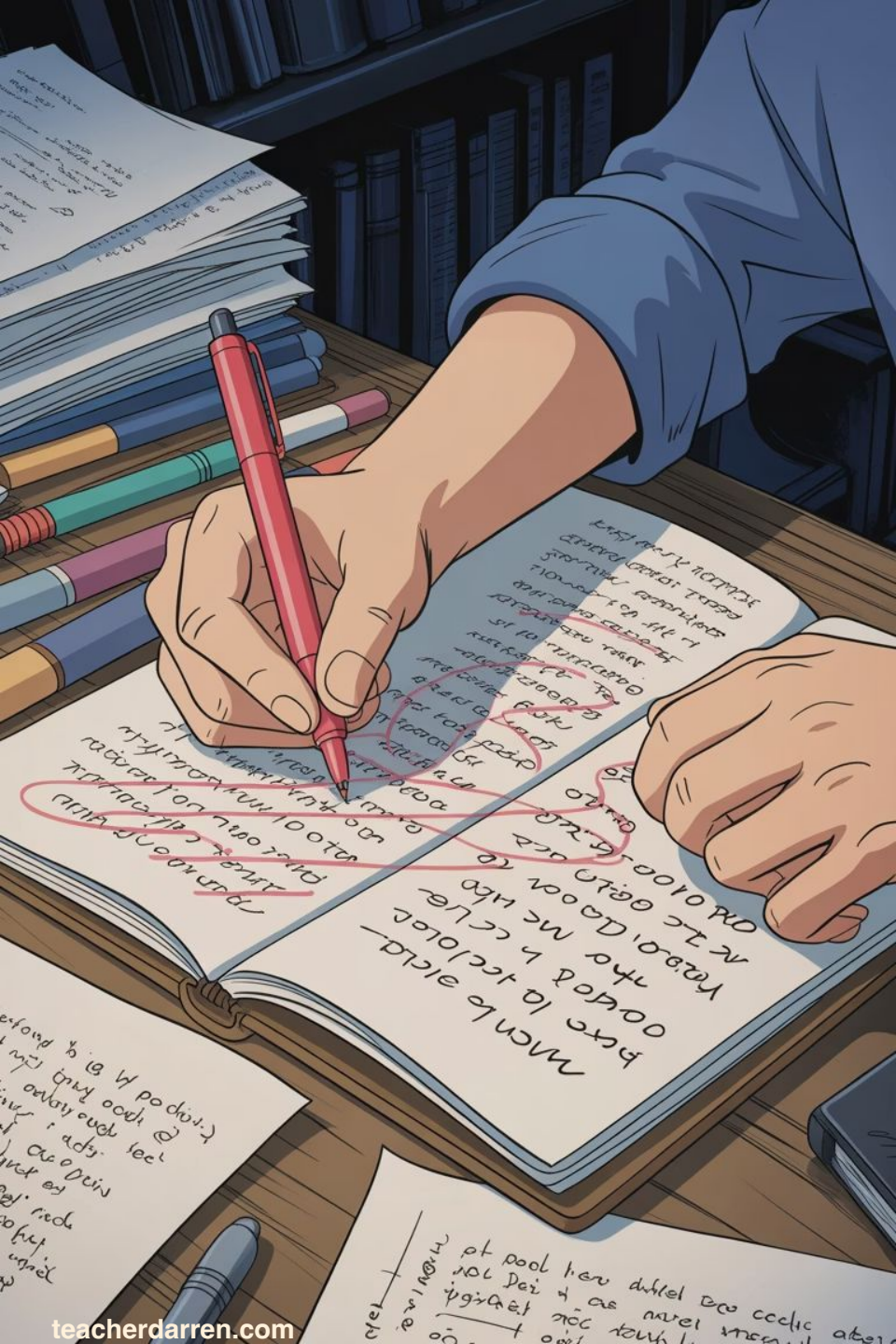
Where could the author add more detail?

The building interior is barely described. The "loud noise" is the most exciting moment — yet it gets only one sentence.

Which part is most interesting?

The scare at the end has real potential. Expanding that scene would make the whole paragraph more memorable.





Pass Two: Sentence Craft

STEP 2 OF 3

The story now makes sense. In Pass Two, we improve how the story is told. We are not fixing grammar — we are making the writing stronger, clearer, and more vivid.



Weak Verbs

Replace "walked" and "looked" with precise, energetic action words.



Repeated Openings

Avoid starting multiple sentences with "We" or "It."



Unnecessary Words

Cut anything that doesn't add meaning or detail.



Vague Vocabulary

Replace general words like "everything" and "very" with specific, vivid language.

Pass Two Example: Stronger Sentences

STEP 2 OF 3

Original

We walked around for a long time and we looked at everything that was there.

Revised

We wandered through the abandoned park, examining every broken bench, faded sign, and overgrown pathway.

What Changed?

→ Stronger verbs

"Wandered" and "examining" replace the flat "walked" and "looked."

→ Precise details

Broken bench, faded sign, and overgrown pathway paint a specific picture.

→ Better imagery

The reader can now *see* the park, not just know someone visited it.

Another Pass Two Revision: Show, Don't Tell

STEP 2 OF 3

Original

It was dark and dusty.

This tells the reader a fact. It creates no image, no atmosphere, no feeling.

Revised

Dust floated through the dim light as the abandoned building stood silently around us.

This shows the detail in motion. The reader experiences the moment.

-  **This is the "show, don't tell" principle in action. Instead of labeling a feeling or scene, the writer recreates it so the reader can experience it directly.**

Pass Three: Grammar

STEP 3 OF 3

The story makes sense. The writing is vivid. Now — and only now — we focus on correctness. Grammar is the final polish that makes strong writing look professional.

✓ Subject-Verb Agreement

Make sure every subject and verb match in number.

✓ Verb Tense

Keep the entire paragraph in one consistent timeline.

✓ Punctuation

Check commas, periods, and apostrophes for accuracy.

✓ Capitalization

Ensure proper nouns and sentence beginnings are capitalized.

✓ Spelling

Catch any typos or homophone errors that remain.

Pass Three Example: Subject–Verb Agreement

STEP 3 OF 3

These errors come from the original draft. Each involves a subject and verb that do not agree — one of the most common grammar mistakes in narrative writing.

Trees + Singular Verb

~~The trees was very tall.~~

✓ The trees were very tall.

"Trees" is plural — it needs "were."

Wrong Verb Form

~~The wind blow through the branches.~~

✓ The wind blew through the branches.

Past tense requires the irregular form "blew."

Subject–Verb Mismatch

~~It make the place feel mysterious.~~

✓ It made the place feel mysterious.

"It" is singular — and the story is in past tense.

More Pass Three Corrections: Verb Tense

STEP 3 OF 3

These final corrections fix verb tense errors that break the consistency of the story's timeline. A reader should never be confused about *when* events happened.

Present Tense Slipping In

~~I hear a loud noise behind us...~~

✓ I heard a loud noise behind us...

The story is told in past tense. "Hear" breaks that pattern.

Wrong Subject–Verb Pair

~~Nothing were there...~~

✓ Nothing was there...

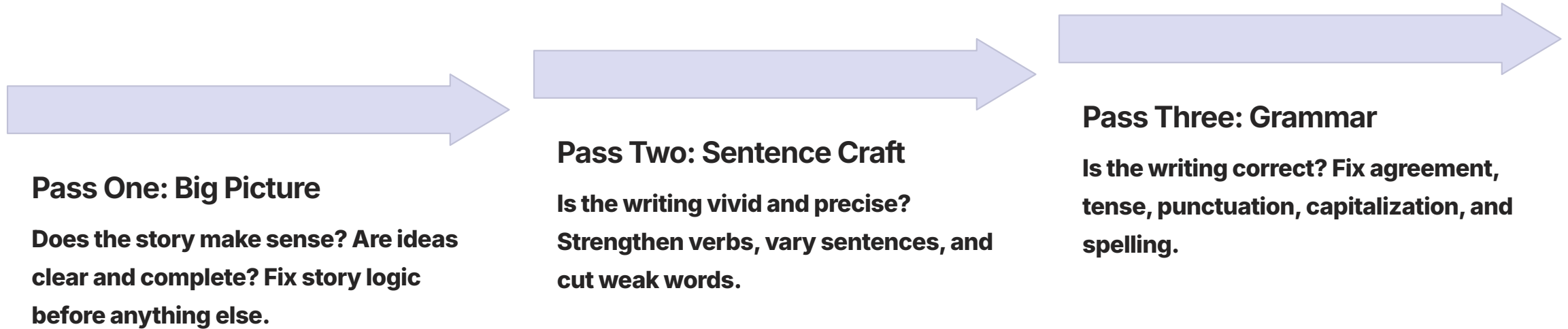
"Nothing" is grammatically singular — it always takes a singular verb, even though it feels like "zero things."



After both corrections, the timeline remains fully consistent: every verb is in the simple past tense.

Compare the Whole Process

Professional writers follow a process — not a random checklist of corrections. Each pass builds on the last, moving from the largest concerns down to the smallest details.





Your Turn: Partner Editing

PRACTICE ACTIVITY

Working with a partner, complete all three editing passes on today's paragraph. Use everything you have learned — and follow the order of the passes.

01

Pass One First

Read for meaning and story logic. Mark anything confusing or missing.

02

Then Pass Two

Strengthen the language. Replace weak verbs and vague words with vivid, precise choices.

03

Finally Pass Three

Correct all grammar, tense, agreement, and punctuation errors.



Key rule: Finish one complete pass before beginning the next. Do not edit everything at once.

Reflection: Which Pass Mattered Most?

Think about the changes made to today's paragraph across all three passes. Which editing pass made the biggest difference in the overall quality of the writing? Be ready to justify your answer with a specific example from the paragraph.

Pass One Better Ideas The story became clearer and more complete when we identified gaps in logic and detail.	Pass Two Better Writing Strong verbs and vivid details transformed flat sentences into real imagery.	Pass Three Better Grammar Correcting agreement and tense gave the writing a polished, professional finish.
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Exit Ticket

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Take two to three minutes to respond to both prompts in your notebook or on a sticky note. Be honest — there are no wrong answers here.

Complete This Sentence

"Today I learned that editing is..."

Go beyond simply saying "important." What did you learn about how or why editing works the way it does?

Name One Strategy

"The next time I revise my own writing, I will..."

Choose a specific strategy from today — a pass, a technique, or a question you will ask yourself as you edit.





Looking Ahead

COMING UP TOMORROW

Editing Like a Cambridge Examiner

Tomorrow, you will apply the same three-pass editing process independently to a brand-new narrative paragraph — no partner, no guided walkthrough.

1

Today

Three-pass editing process with a partner, guided practice

2

Tomorrow

Independent three-pass editing on a new paragraph — Cambridge Examiner