

Mechanics

The first editor of any piece is always the writer...

*- Nancie Atwell
In the Middle*

Conventions are the rules of language - **spelling, punctuation, grammar/usage, paragraphing, and capitalization** - that make your text correct and easy for others to read. When you follow the rules, readers don't need to waste energy mentally editing; they can pay attention to your clever ideas, creative organization, unique voice, vibrant word choice, and lyrical fluency.

Conventions are different from the other five traits (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency) because to improve those traits you have been learning how to revise - how to *rethink* and *re-see* your work. Editing is fixing - **making sure the text is as error-free as possible**. The purpose is to make your paper readable to someone else. Sometimes mistakes in conventions get in the way and keep the reader from understanding your message. They also irritate some readers - something no writer sets out to do deliberately!

Editing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words.

- Mark Twain

Develop a proofreader's eye. Check everything. Then check it again. It's often hard to spot your own mistakes. Try reading aloud; it makes you slow down. You may also find it helpful to have someone else look at your work. Editing is a skill in itself -- quite a bit different from writing. To be a good editor you must practice. Teach yourself to read slowly, and with care. Be honest; dare to see what is.

One of the hardest tasks of the writer is to read what is on the page, not what the writer hoped would be on the page.

- Donald Murray