Essay Editing Checklist

**Content and Structure**

* The introduction grabs the reader with mystery, suspense, or humor.
* The title is accurate yet interesting.
* The essay has stakes, something important to be discussed.
* The points are supported with logic, research, experience, or the dramatized experience of others.
* There are vivid details of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
* The paragraphs are arranged in the most logical order, either chronologically, by theme, or by another method.
* Who, what, when, where, and why are included.
* Description is mixed in with action.
* There is a clear conclusion, one that shows a change or a deeper meaning that evolved over the course of the essay.

**Words**

* Searched for *is*, *was*, and *were* to check for passive voice and strengthen the verb.
* Searched for *ly* to root out adverbs.
* Examined every adjective to make sure it’s necessary and that it adds to the essay.
* Used software to read the essay out loud to make sure each word is the intended one.
* Deleted all instances of the word *very*.
* Ran a spell-check.
* Made sure the word count is appropriate for the intended publication.
* Checked to make sure there is no unexplained jargon or words of foreign origin.
* Used the vocabulary appropriate for the topic.
* Carefully reviewed the text for problem words (*they’re*, *their*, *there*; *your*, *you’re*; *its*, *it’s*) and made sure each was used correctly.
* Chose words that are concrete instead of vague, inventive instead of cliché, and unusual without being esoteric.

**Rhythm and Style**

* Read the essay out loud to make sure it has rhythm and edited parts where it didn’t.
* Used clear transitions.
* Varied the length of sentences, layering in longer and shorter ones.
* Played with the words to find those most appropriate for the tone, dialect, and purpose.

**References**

* Cited reliable sources of information.
* Double-checked all quotes.
* Fact-checked all statements for accuracy.
* Double-checked the spelling of names.