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.