

# 10 Self-Editing Tips

an excerpt from  
the upcoming

## SCREENPLAY FORMAT GUIDE

The **WHAT & WHY**

of the

Technical Stuff

Presented by



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Format & prose guidelines for spec screenwriters.

## 10 SELF-EDITING TIPS

### FIRST: Turn off “auto correct” before you edit (& before you start a new script)

Keep software on auto-fill (SmartType or QuickType) for character slugs & scene headings.

- in **MMSW\***: TOOLS > PAUSE AUTO-CORRECTION (or change in PREFERENCES > SPELLING)

### 1. Spell-check (w/grammar where available)

Seems obvious, but it’s easy to forget or ignore those squiggly lines.

- in **FD\***: TOOLS > SPELLING
- in **Celtx desktop**: TOOLS > CHECK SPELLING
- in **MMSW**: TOOLS > SPELL CHECK
- in **Word**: TOOLS > SPELLING & GRAMMAR
- in **Scrivener**: EDIT > SPELLING & GRAMMAR
- in **FadeIn**: DOCUMENT > CHECK SPELLING

### 2. Auto-check format

Some apps will allow you to scroll through or simply auto-fix any format issues.

- in **FD**: TOOLS > FORMAT ASSISTANT (&/or REFORMAT for more control)
  - **FD11**’s Format Assistant causes new problems due to poor code, so you may have to manually correct the errors Format Assistant finds until they come out with an update that corrects it.
  - **FD10** & earlier have no issues with Format Assistant.
  - Use Format Assistant **one last time** to eliminate any introduced spacing errors.
- in **MMSW**: TOOLS > RUN SMARTCHECK
- in **FadeIn**: DOCUMENT > FIND ERRORS

### 3. Check character names for consistency & contrast

Find misspellings or unintended name changes by checking the alphabetical cast list.

- in **FD**: DOCUMENT > SMARTTYPE > REBUILD > ALPHABETIZE
- in **Celtx online**: SCRIPT > CATALOG
- in **Celtx desktop**: click REPORTS tab > CHARACTER
- in **MMSW**: click in any Action paragraph: in **windows**: shift+control+c; on **mac**: shift+⌘+c
- in **FadeIn**: PRODUCTION > REPORTS > CAST REPORT > alphabetical

### 4. Check scene headings for consistency & flow

By listing the scenes you’ll see things clearly. Most apps have more than one way to list them.

- in **FD**: TOOLS > SHOW NAVIGATOR
- in **Celtx**: click left pane (scene breakdown)
- in **MMSW**: NAVIDOC > SCENES
- in **FadeIn**: PRODUCTION > REPORTS > ELEMENT REPORT > SCENE HEADING

### 5. Look at alphabetized lists of EACH element to check for consistency

Find misspellings &/or inconsistencies for character names, scene locations, scene times & transitions.

- in **FD**: DOCUMENT > SMARTTYPE > choose element > REBUILD > ALPHABETIZE
- in **MMSW**: FORMAT > USER LISTS > click element > COPY FROM SCRIPT (just LOOK at the list)
- in **FadeIn**: PRODUCTION > REPORTS > ELEMENT REPORT > choose element

### 6. Read backward

Technical mistakes will jump out at you if you scroll UP instead of down.

## 7. Let your script talk to you

Text-to-speech can read any text aloud. In some apps you can assign character voices.

- **in FD:** TOOLS > SPEECH CONTROL (opt to ASSIGN VOICES first)
- **in MMSW:** TOOLS > SPEAK SELECTION (must first ASSIGN VOICES)
- **in any program:**
  - **on MAC:** SYSTEM PREFERENCES > DICTATION & SPEECH
  - Google “text-to-speech” app for your device

Low-tech solution: Read it aloud yourself or in a table read at a meetup.

## 8. Print it out

If budget & supplies allow, it's sometimes easiest to see things on an actual page. At very least, look at the PDF version without any app distractions so you can see actual issues.

## 9. Walk away

Leave your script for a month. Come back to it with fresh eyes.

## 10. Let Grandma read it with a highlighter in hand (or in Adobe Reader)

- If loved ones can't figure out what's going on because it's too technical, *it's too technical*. Specs are stories first, scripts second. Ask loved ones to highlight anything they don't understand.
- Loved ones don't want to hurt your feelings about the story, but they'll be happy to show you how smart they are when it comes to grammar & spelling. Let them find glaring issues you missed.

## 11. BONUS TIP

Contact <http://ProofMySpec.com/order.html> for a thorough, professional edit before you send your script to anyone for consideration or evaluation.

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\*MMSW = Movie Magic Screenwriter

\*FD = Final Draft

