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TUTOR TIP 6: THE EDITING CHECKLIST (396 words)

A successful writer creates from the mind first, free of the constraints of grammar and then edits later. Books do not find themselves on the shelf perfectly written after one attempt. No, they are edited and fixed up many times. My students are amazed when I tell them this.

Students don't need to write perfectly the first time either. Therefore, they need to check over their work before they hand it in. But what about the students who forget capitals and periods every time or the students who don't notice their errors? What about these children? You can remind them over and over but some children still forget the basics.

At home you have the option of checking their work but what happens at school? You can't always be there but you can help.

Work with your children to create editing checklists. These lists allow children to write without worrying about grammar and spelling. Wonderful stories are created with free thought. The idea is to fix the problems later.

First, create personalized checklists with your children. Put things on the list that your children often forget to fix while writing. Although each list will be slightly different, there are some basics you can include:

- * check for backward letters like b or d
- * start each sentence with a capital letter
- * make sure there is a period, question mark or an exclamation mark at the end of each sentence
- * check for indented paragraphs
- * check for commas
- * check for complete sentences

* check for plurals (s or es)

* underline any words that look wrong then ask someone for help or check a dictionary

After the story or paragraph is completed, put it away for a while. I find children are less reluctant to fix their work after a short break. Later, pull out the editing checklist. Do all the sentences start with a capital? Do the sentences end with punctuation? These checklists take the pressure off of forgetful children empowering children to be creative. Eventually, most children will remember to edit their work without the list. Remind your children that all professional writers write first and edit later. Then step back and give your children a chance to be editors!