The Editor's Omnibus

There's a lot that can go wrong with writing a story, and providing in-depth feedback to these stories is quite exhausting. First and foremost, we would like to recommend the following resources to have open for your editing convenience:

- **amacita's Editing Resources**
  - Need someone to read over your story for Equestria Daily? One of these groups might be able to help with edits and feedback much more than we can.
- **Ezn's Writing Guide**
  - A great starting place that covers many aspects of storytelling and writing in significant detail.
  - This is a more pony focused guide but covers plenty of the basics and advanced stuff.
- **Winston's Fanfiction Writing Guide**
  - This is a more pony focused guide but covers plenty of the basics and advanced stuff.
- **Purdue OWL**
  - Though geared toward academic writing, the OWL provides great references for mechanics, grammar, and punctuation.
- **TV Tropes**
  - A *very* addictive wiki that unpacks and explains the narrative devices found in your favorite stories.

Questions? Comments? Suggestions for inclusion or improvement? Send 'em to fanfiction@equestriadaily.com and we'll look into it!

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Mechanical Issues

These are language-level concerns with largely prescriptive fixes, and are often resolved with a thorough proof-reading.

- **Adverb usage**
  - These are fine when used sparingly (see?). An *over-reliance* on adverbs, especially -ly adverbs, is a sign of weak writing.
  - The presence of an adverb often (argh) points to the existence of a stronger noun or verb. "Hurled" is more effective than "thrown hard."

- **Asterisk usage**
  - Asterisks often denote asides or footnotes, which break a reader's flow within the story. They can also represent actions, like *throws ball*, which is poor style.
  - Don't use 'em except for in page breaks.

- **Comma misuse**
  - These include comma splices and run-on sentences. Google them.

- **Dash/hyphen confusion**
  - There's a difference between how we use hyphens (-), en dashes (–), and em dashes (—). En or em dashes should be used to indicate long pauses or cut-off speech. Hyphens should be used to indicate a quick stutter or in a hyphenated term (yellow-coated).

- **Dialogue paragraphing**
  - Start a new paragraph every time a different character speaks.

- **Dialogue punctuation/capitalization**
  - Stuff like this is wrong:

    > "Rainbow Dash is 20% cooler." Rarity said.
    > Rarity said, "you're 20% cooler, Rainbow Dash!"

  - Here are the fixes:

    > "Rainbow Dash is 20% cooler," Rarity said.
    > Rarity said, "You're 20% cooler, Rainbow Dash!"

  - The rules governing dialogue punctuation and capitalization are quite extensive, and Google will be your friend here once again.

- **Formatting**
  - *Unconventional* usage of font properties (size, color, bolding/italics) or punctuation marks (< { [~ etc.) can distract or annoy your readers.

- **Homonym confusion**
  - "There, they're." Don't be one of those people.
  - [Here's](#) a sample list from the people who write the Oxford English Dictionary.

- **Page breaks**
  - For the most part, stick to centered triple asterisks (***) or a horizontal rule. We called you out because your page breaks were either missing, inconsistent, or distracting.

- **Paragraphing**
  - In general, begin a new paragraph when a different character takes action or when you introduce a new idea.
  - Paragraph consistently, keeping line breaks and indents the same throughout your writing as much as possible.
  - One-line paragraphs and walls of text are equally bad in excess.

- **Parenthetical usage**
  - Limit the number of times you take the audience aside with parenthetical statements, especially if you use parentheses to do this. Some readers are sensitive to their presence.

- **Passive voice**
  - "Sunset Shimmer stole the crown" uses less words than "The crown was stolen by Sunset Shimmer," so the former reads with more energy. Active voice for the win!
  - Passive voice can also disguise agency, which could be bad if you only say "the crown was stolen" and your reader hasn't seen *Equestria Girls.*

- **Punctuation**
  - You're probably missing periods or semi-colons somewhere, or else have too many—among other things.

- **Repetition**
  - Repeating the same words can really jar your reader out of your story. Good language reads invisibly.
  - That said…

- **Saidism abuse**
  - Don't shy away from good ol' "said" in dialogue. It's invisible and takes the reader

no effort to process versus a glut of "bellowed," "whimpered," "keened," "boasted," and "ejaculated."

- **Spelling**
  - Spell-checkers aren't infallible, so consider getting an extra pair of eyes on your story.

- **Subject/verb agreement**
  - Google-able issue. English verbs the worst, but do your best with them. Twilight would never say "Ponies loves learning about writing!" without burning with regret afterward.

- **Syntax**
  - Syntax deals with how you arrange words into sentences to create meaning. Strive for clear syntax so that readers don't have to puzzle out your intent.

- **Tense shifts**
  - A story told in the past tense looks very weird when something like "Pinkie Pie will steal forty cakes tomorrow" shows up in the narration. Keep your tenses consistent.

- **Thesaurus abuse**
  - Choosing related words from a thesaurus for variety's sake often leads to unintentional shifts of tone or intensity if you're not careful.
  - Big words are not necessarily better words. "Obsequious" draws as much attention to itself as the noun it's attached to, and that's bad.

Narrative Issues

These issues often elude spelling and grammar checkers and have to deal with how you present your story. They often require a reworking of the writing itself or the underlying story and are a bit more involved than mechanical issues.

- **Awkward phrasing**
  - Rule of thumb: if you can't read it aloud comfortably, figure out why and change it until it reads better.

- **Cliches**
  - Treat these as low-hanging fruit. Sure, they still work, but how proud will you really be of a line like "Applejack's eyes sparkled like emeralds"? I mean, it isn't yours.

- **Confusing**
  - The reader's lost. We have no idea what's happening in the story. Can you make what's going on a little clearer?

- **Deus ex machina**
  - Events like this invalidate everything that came before in your story. Why bother reading about Spike losing a fight against King Sombra if the earth suddenly swallows Sombra whole? There's no connection.

- **Exposition (or Infodump)**
  - If you're using a lot of it, you might be starting your story late, and vice versa. Exposition dumps are rarely good style, and halt the narrative while the reader catches up.
  - You want your characters to do the heavy lifting story-wise. Determine how much exposition you can weave into their involvement in the story, and how little backstory you can get away with before that.
  - Caveat: a sci-fi story or other highly original setting may require some exposition dumping to provide context.

- **Flat writing**
  - Your reader isn't emotionally invested in your writing. Try varying your sentence structure, having your characters interact more with their environments, and honor Show, Don't Tell.

- **Inconsistent point of view**
  - This mostly applies to omniscient PoV, as it's very easy to abuse when writers want to reveal what everyone's thinking in a single scene. If you start in a limited

PoV and hop between that and omniscience, you're gonna have a bad time.

- **Jargon usage**
  - Slang used in highly-specialized contexts has its place, too. But don't distract a reader with it. This goes with technobabble that has no bearing on the larger story at hand.

- **Lack of conflict**
  - What's at risk in your story? What are your characters hoping to accomplish? We couldn't find an answer to questions like these, so it's hard to get involved in your writing.

- **Lack of detail**
  - Equestria is a vibrant, lived-in setting. Every home has detail, even the studio apartment with the single mattress on the floor. It's a crime against literature not to take advantage of the various locales, peoples, events, and history given to you.
  - If your story takes place outside of Equestria, it's even more paramount that you give the reader enough to visualize what's taking place in your story.

- **[Lavender unicorn syndrome](#)**
  - The *abuse* of phrases like "the lavender unicorn" to refer to Twilight Sparkle, often for the sake of avoiding repetition. Refactor your sentences so the repetition goes away.
  - Occasional LUS is fine for setting scenes, atmospheres, or tones—again, it becomes a syndrome through abuse.

- **Not a story**
  - Closely related to lack of conflict. For example, navel gazing rarely makes for compelling reading.
  - You may have submitted a single vignette or a scene instead.

- **Not funny enough**
  - For [Comedy] stories primarily. Feel free to ask us why, since comedy can be quite situational.

- **Onomatopoeia usage**
  - Words that imitate the source of the sound they make.
  - In general, avoid giving these their own paragraphs or using them as verbs if such usage is uncommon. "Bounced" is okay. "Boinged" alerts the censors.

- **Pacing**
  - The dramatic timing of your story has failed. Your epic Celestia/Luna origin story

cannot be told in 2,500 words, nor should your one-day pony-loves-pony shipfic outdo *Ulysses* in length.

- **Purple prose**
  - Your writing pays too much attention to matters that don't deserve it, be they details or rhetorical wanderings. Your narrative bogs down as a result. Trim it down. Above aesthetic beauty, good writing flows smoothly and shouldn't slow the reader.

- **Plot hole**
  - Readers will yell at you for forgetting in Chapter 5 what happened in Chapter 2. Find a way to patch the hole.

- **Reference abuse**
  - Every time you make Derpy say, "I just don't know what went wrong," Hasbro green-lights another alicorn.
  - References should be subtle and sparing. Never substitute references for story content.

- **Show, don't tell**
  - Be circumspect. Only rarely should you settle for saying somepony's angry when you can instead show how their teeth are grinding and their head's lowered into charging stance.
  - Evoking sensory details with smells, sounds, textures, and tastes supplements the highly visual medium of text and provides a more complete picture.
  - In the end, you want to invite your readers to think for themselves. They'll feel better figuring things out themselves rather than being told what's happening.

- **Talking heads**
  - Two characters trade words without being anywhere or doing anything. At least, that's what your writing gives us. Take advantage of your characters' surroundings when you're writing dialogue — people *always* interact with their world while they're talking.

- **Tone**
  - What the narration says doesn't match up with what is happening in the story.
  - In particular, wangst can quickly kill a reader's interest in your writing no matter how you try to justify it.

- **Weather report opening**
  - Every other story we receive begins with "It was a sunny day in Ponyville" or something to that effect. Don't be every other story.

- **Wish fulfillment**
  - The only discernable purpose of your story is to live out a personal fantasy with limited relevance to other readers. These stories often fail because the focus character gets what they want very early on, removing meaningful conflict.

Character Issues

These issues merit special attention because stories sink or swim on the back of sound characterization. Depending on how your characters conduct themselves, your story may need a rework to fit their personalities better, and are certainly more involved than mechanical issues.

- **Accent abuse**
  - Best horse gets victimized the most here. Never sacrifice readability for image. Pawrts lahk this'un rahght 'ere mahght ee-ree-tayt sum fowlk, Ah reck'un.

- **Dialogue content**
  - Might be any of the following:
    - There might be too much of it, or too little.
    - There's a lot that doesn't actually do much.
    - Who's speaking and what's being said don't match up. Pinkie Pie shouldn't speak in bland academic treatises unless you absolutely know what you're doing.

- **Flat characterization**
  - The characters you call Applejack and Rainbow Dash have no discernable personality, unlike their show counterparts. Flesh your characters out some more.

- **Lack of believability**
  - Given a context (Equestria, in most cases here), there is no way this character can act the way they do without attracting significant attention or breaking the setting. There's no reason to believe they belong in the setting you provide.

- **Luna dialogue**
  - Maybe you mixed up your "thee"s and "thou"s, or your Flankspearean Equestrian was hard to cipher. As with accents, never sacrifice readability for image.

- **Mary Sue (also Gary Stu)**
  - In a nutshell, these characters are served by the story above all else. The story gives them whatever they want.
  - Symptoms include being overpowered, possessing a special connection to significant canon characters, being liked by everyone important, having a unique and/or overcompensated appearance, and use as an author's wish-fulfillment vehicle.
  - Google and TV Tropes can tell you a lot more than we can here.

- **Names**
  - Raven Darkmoon Solarfang Bloodhorn is not an Equestrian name. Neither are

Solinixus or Jimmy. Steven Magnet and Pony/Doughnut Joe get passes because Hasbro has canonized them.

- **One-dimensional characterization**
  - [Contemplate this image](). A Pinkie Pie always in "party, party, party" mode becomes grinding if that's not the focus of your story (see "A Friend in Deed" for when that *is* the focus).
  - Characters become interesting when they do things that don't align with their "usual" personality. You can see how playing opposites for a bit have led the Mane 6 to star in some very good episodes, so take advantage of that.

- **Out of character**
  - In a sense, the evil twin of 1D-characterization. Rainbow Dash would never show outward happiness at going to the spa at the beginning of a story.
  - Cupcakes people: Pinkamena is the product of sadness and insecurity, not bloody vengeance.
  - If you have a character narrating your story, make sure your writing sounds like something they'd say. Scootaloo does not hold a Ph. D. in High Equestrian.

- **Self-insert**
  - Not always a bad thing, but you're already skirting the "no bronies in Equestria" rule. It is very hard to write yourself as an interesting character with room for growth.
  - Closely tied with wish fulfillment.

- **Unsympathetic characters**
  - Your reader has no one to root for or care about. Villains are not automatically unsympathetic characters once you realize they believe they are in the right.

- **Zecora dialogue**
  - This deserves a special mention because she's so hard to nail. Your rhymes are either forced, don't follow a consistent meter, or don't flow well.

Content Issues

These issues highlight aspects of your story that prevent them from appearing on Equestria Daily. Because we're a prominent public-facing part of the fandom, we want to limit exposure of these topics because you're trying to fit them into *My Little Pony,* and not a lot of people will get that or be sympathetic.

- **Brony in Equestria**
  - Banned for inevitable spaghetti.

- **Child abuse**
  - It's illegal.

- **Controversial title**
  - The title of your story is engineered to shock or provoke a normal blog reader. Some of these titles get through, but be prepared to justify why yours deserves to, too.

- **Drug use**
  - This is another thing that just is more controversial than we want to handle. If Rainbow Dash is going 420blazeit on some poison joke, we might look the other way, but real world drugs are a definite no.

- **Explicit sexual content**
  - Ask yourself why you want to show the Internet how much you enjoy writing horse intercourse.

- **Fetish catering**
  - We're not taking your inflation story. It's unsettling to those who don't share your tastes.

- **Foalshipping**
  - We'd rather not deal with stories that make foals act on adult feelings. This doesn't mean we're banning stories where Scootaloo's crushing on Rumble, but impassioned acts of romance between eight-year-olds are problematic.

- **Gratuitous gore or violence**
  - Note the "gratuitous". A story incorporating violence to explore a theme or establish a tone is much different than a gluefic.
  - Gluefics have no other purpose except for exulting in harming their characters.

- **Incest**

- ○ See the entry for explicit sexual content.

- **Metafic**
  - ○ To avert drama, we do not accept stories which include fandom personalities in a significant capacity. This also extends to bronies, internet celebrities, and MLP:FiM show staff.
  - ○ Regular celebrities are generally more acceptable.
  - ○ Nicolas Cage is always acceptable.

- **Not English**
  - ○ We can only accept stories written in English.

- **Not pony enough**
  - ○ We're supposed to highlight My Little Pony fanfiction, so try and make sure your stories can be connected to the same universe the show puts out.

- **Overdone concept**
  - ○ If we already have thirty stories on EqD similar to yours, be prepared to explain why yours deserves to be the thirty-first.

- **Plagiarism**
  - ○ We shouldn't even have to explain this one.

- **Ponies on Earth**
  - ○ We spotlight pony fanfiction, and part of that definition means keeping the story away from Earth unless you're doing sci-fi or G1 (not exhaustive)

- **Trollfic**
  - ○ We were done after The Spiderses.

- **Under word limit**
  - ○ The current rules are 2,500+ words for complete submissions, or 3,000+ words for incomplete submissions.