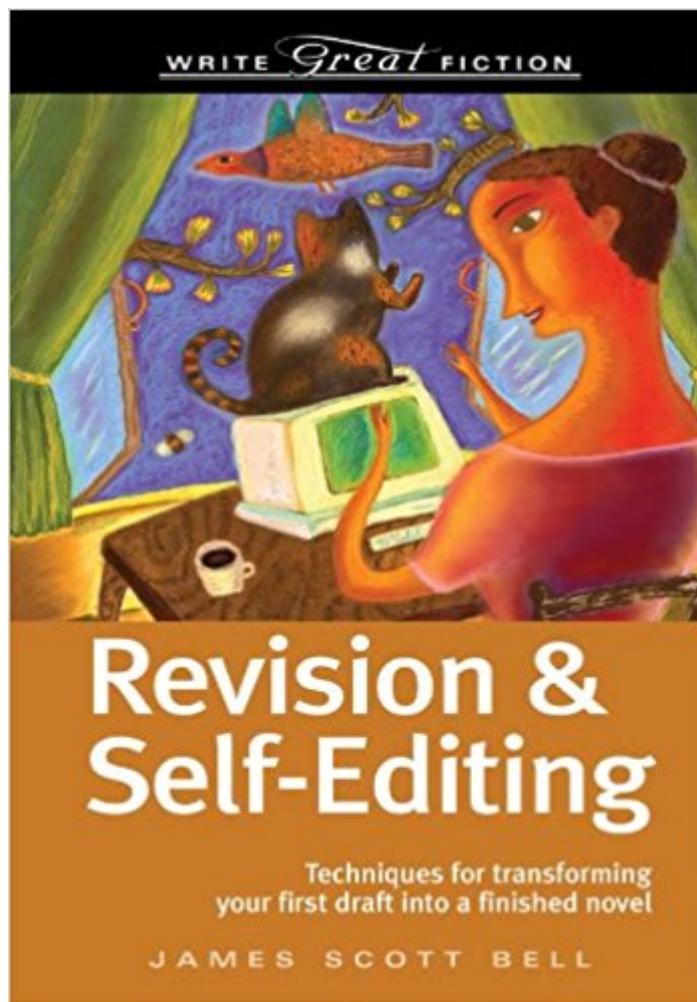


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# Write Great Fiction Revision And Self-Editing



## **Synopsis**

Don't let the revision process intimidate you any longer. Discover how to successfully transform your first draft into a polished final draft readers won't be able to forget. In *Write Great Fiction: Revision & Self-Editing*, James Scott Bell draws on his experience as a novelist and instructor to provide specific revision tips geared toward the first read-through, as well as targeted self-editing instruction focusing on the individual elements of a novel like plot, structure, characters, theme, voice, style, setting, and endings. You'll learn how to: Write a cleaner first draft right out of the gate using Bell's plotting principles Get the most out of revision and self-editing techniques by honing your skills with detailed exercises Systematically revise a completed draft using the ultimate revision checklist that talks you through the core story elements Whether you're in the process of writing a novel, have a finished draft you don't know what to do with, or have a rejected manuscript you don't know how to fix, *Revision & Self-Editing* gives you the guidance you need to write and revise like a pro.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Bell is an awesome teacher, with a great way of communicating. This is one of his better books. As with many of them, there is a bit of overlap with some others. But that does not detract from this one's value.

This is part of the Writer's Digest "Write Great Fiction" series. I found Bell's other book in the series, Plot and Structure, to be quite helpful, so I was interested in seeing what this one had to offer. I've already developed my own "system" for revising, basically starting with big issues and working down to the detailed polishing. But revision is such an important part of the writing process that I wanted to get as much advise on the subject as I could. I imagined this book would be devoted exclusively to revision and editing strategies: how to use critique groups, friends as readers, the mechanics of moving text around or rearranging scenes while maintaining flow, record-keeping strategies, which problems to address first, etc. That's not what it is, for the most part. The first two-thirds of the book, although titled "Self-Editing", is really a distillation of writing advice on standard topics, such as plot, character, dialog, point of view, etc. If you own some of the other books in this series, this will be familiar territory. And the subjects are approached mostly from the point of view of how to write well rather than how to edit what you've already written. The final third of the book, titled "Revision", gets into more of the nuts-and-bolts material I had imagined the book to be about. A fair amount of this is pep-talk or philosophy of writing, but the heart of this section is a revision checklist. This is a genuinely useful tool: a list of things to check your writing for, listed in an order that makes sense (big-picture stuff first). There are "key questions" and "common fixes" for each element of fiction. If nothing else, this helps alleviate the feeling one can have, sitting down to revise of manuscript, of being overwhelmed with all the different things that might need work. I know I have a tendency to revise in a few areas and neglect others. The checklist is a good cure for that. Still, there wasn't much in this book that I hadn't already read or figured out for myself. No "magic bullets" for foolproof and efficient revision. All that said, I think this is an excellent book, especially for aspiring writers who have not read other books or taken classes on the subject. It has the virtue of covering everything and emphasizing the importance of revision in the creative process. In fact, if someone were beginning to write fiction and wanted a single book to learn from, this is the one I'd recommend. Bell's prose is clear and engaging, his examples are cogent, and his advice is sound. He's not teaching a rigid method or promoting his personal preferences, just presenting the basics of good fiction writing in a way that any new writer can understand and apply. If you don't have any books on writing, this is a highly recommended place to start. If you've bought and read a shelf full of them, you've probably got what you need already.

This book was the last in Write Great Fiction series that I bought and read. This one was great because James Scott Bell is my favorite author of the ones featured in this series and this specific book kind of encompasses all of them. All these books in Write Great Fiction are a must-have, I always have them out on my writing table to be able to use them as references!

This book has helped me avoid mistakes numerous times. I love it.

With four such self-help books on my shelf, I hardly need another, but I bought this one anyway. The first four were full of all the "do nots" that, if your name is John Grisham or James Lee Burke, must read like comedy (to them). Seriously, if you take all these "do nots" to heart, you'll never live through reading the next best seller because the name brand authors "do not" pay attention to these "do nots". Take for example: "Do not start a sentence with a word that ends in -ing." E.g. "Walking into the room, Don saw the man hanging by his neck from the rafter." And one of my favorites, "Do not end a sentence with a preposition." (Or what? Someone shoots me?) But the big boys do it all the time! Why? Because that's the way people talk most of the time. Nevertheless, I'm very glad I bought this fifth book. James Scott Bell gives the reader stuff he/she can not only use, but that will spark new ideas on "how" to write in more interesting/realistic dialog (for example). But there's a lot more than dialog lessons here. There is a particularly good chapter (5) on "plot & structure." However, his chapter on "point of view" serves up the same old "point of view" about first person that, again, the big boys must giggle at (try reading James Lee Burke for example). Normally, I hate exercises in a textbook, but I found myself quite fascinated by the ones in the back of this book. All in all, this is the best, most helpful book on revisions and self-editing I've read over the past 12 years. It is not simply a rehash of grammar 101 and guidelines for editors (when there were such animals) from the 1950's. There are many excellent ideas and gremlins to watch out for. "Running through the garage, Frank threw his other four self-help editing books in the dumpster." I rest my case.

I like Bell's fiction, and have always trusted his non-fiction, but this one is just a re-hash of "Plot & Structure." There are a couple of chapters at the end about revision, but they're not up to Bell's standards. I've returned my copy, and am trying to find a good book on revision. This book would be great for someone who doesn't know how to structure a novel. If you're looking for a basic guide to constructing a story, this is fine. I preferred "Plot & Structure," but that's a personal choice. But if you want to revise and edit a book you've already written, you're just not going to find much in the way

of help here. Disappointing.

I have bought several books to help me write my novel. Without question this is the best one I've read. Its strength is in the superb examples of good and bad writing and the clear explanations. The chapter 'Tell vs. versus Show' and the one on dialogue, on techniques to do it better, are fantastic - at least they were for me.

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