Romance Author Self-Edit Checklist

Polish your story, captivate your readers, and make your editor fall in love with your manuscript.
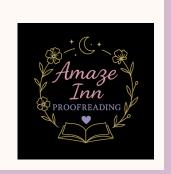
Welcome, Romance Author!

First—congratulations! You've done something incredible: you've finished your draft. You've poured your heart into your characters, tangled them in delicious conflict, and given them a love story worth rooting for.

Now comes the part that turns a good story into an unforgettable one—the polish. This checklist is your pre-editor toolkit: a way to catch the easy fixes, smooth the rough edges, and make sure your romance arc delivers every emotional beat your readers are craving.

Think of it as a friendly guide, not a red-pen lecture. Work through it in three passes—big picture, scene level, and line level—and you'll send your manuscript to your editor and readers with confidence.

And if you ever want a second pair of eyes that understands romance inside and out, I'm here to help you keep your voice, delight your readers, and make your story shine.

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Amaze Inn
PROOFREADING

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1. Story & Structure Pass (Big Picture)

- **Opening Hook**—Does the first page establish tone, POV, and a reason to keep reading?

- **Character Goals & Stakes**—Are the protagonists' desires and obstacles clear by the end of Chapter 1?

- **Romantic Arc**—Is there a believable progression from first meeting to emotional/physical intimacy?

- **Conflict Balance**—Are internal (emotional) and external (plot) conflicts woven together?

- **Pacing**—Does each scene move the romance or plot forward? Are there slow spots that could be tightened?

- **Satisfying Resolution**—Does the ending deliver on the promise of the trope (e.g., HEA/HFN)?

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2. Style & Voice Pass (Scene-Level)

● **POV Consistency**–Is the point of view clear and consistent? Avoid head-hopping unless intentional.

● **Show vs Tell**—Are emotions shown through action, dialogue, and sensory detail rather than explained?

● **Dialogue Flow**—Does each character have a distinct voice? Are tags and beats varied?

● **Romance Heat Level**—Is the sensuality consistent with the intended audience/trope?

● **Emotional Beats**—Are key moments (first kiss, black moment, resolution) given enough weight and space?

● **Tone Alignment**—Does the language match the subgenre (sweet, steamy, dark, comedic, etc.)?

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3. Surface & Polish Pass (Line-Level)

- **Grammar & Punctuation**—Watch for common errors (comma splices, misplaced modifiers, dialogue punctuation).

- **Word Repetition**—Eliminate overused words or phrases, especially in emotional scenes.

- **Filter Words**—Reduce "she saw," "he felt," "I realized" to keep prose immediate.

- **Adverb Overload**—Replace with stronger verbs where possible.

- **Formatting Consistency**—Check italics for thoughts, scene breaks, and chapter headings.

- **Final Read-Aloud**—Read aloud or use text-to-speech to catch awkward phrasing or typos.

Bonus Romance-Specific Touches

- **Trope Check—**Are you delivering the beats readers expect for your chosen trope (enemies-to-lovers, second chance, etc.)?

- **Chemistry Audit—**Do your leads have enough on-page interaction to justify their connection?

- **Sensory Layering—** Are you using all five senses to deepen intimacy and setting?

- **Reader Promise—**Does your blurb, cover, and opening chapter match the tone and content of the book?

About the Editor

Hi, I'm Tracy — a romance-loving proofreader and copy editor who helps authors polish their stories without losing their unique voice. I specialize in romance: small town, slow burn, fantasy, paranormal, and spicy genres, and I know exactly how to keep your readers turning pages. Whether you're prepping for self-publishing or submitting to a publisher, I'll help you deliver a manuscript that shines.

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