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LINE EDITING: Definition and process

Line editing is a way to address the style and usage of written language. Improving sentence clarity is the priority; however, this also helps identify errors.

Place this tool below the first line of text on the page. Read the line aloud and consider the **30-second fixes** on the reverse side. Continue moving the ruler down the page line by line.

The 30-second fix is for those times when a deadline prevents you from revising a passage; at least you can make a sentence stronger than it was.

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LINE EDITING: 30-second fixes to improve clarity

- Circle *there is/are/etc.* phrases. Find the first noun (now the subject of your sentence), cross out “that” if it appears, and look for the verb following “that,” which is now the action of the sentence:
There are bluebonnets that line the highways of Texas. becomes *Bluebonnets line the highways of Texas.*
- Box **to be** verbs (*is/are/were/would/will*) and replace these verbs with a strong action:
The earrings are in a box. can change to *The earrings sparkle in the box.*
- Cross out phrases like *I think/believe/feel that...* and *It seems that...* The first noun phrase is the subject of your sentence:
I think that our cycling team is impressive. is less assertive than *Our cycling team is impressive.*
- Cross out **very, a lot, many, never, always** when you see them. If emphasis is needed, find a specific verb or precise adjective:
The dorm room was very dirty. says less than *The dorm room reeked of sweaty socks, soured milk, and stale pizza.*

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