Keys to Effective Editing

Checklist—Copyediting Paragraphs

Short form

Check length.

❑ Divide long paragraphs.

❑ Develop short ones.

Read first sentence of each paragraph for topic sentences and flow.

❑ Add topic sentences.

❑ Check for unity.

❑ Revisit organization if necessary.

❑ Check for coherence.

Long form

Step / If	Then / If	Then
1) Assess the paragraph's length. In comparison with other surrounding paragraphs, is the paragraph significantly –		
- **longer**	Does the paragraph contain a series of abbreviations, legal authorities, locations, names, citations, or other data?	Consider using a list or table.
	Does the paragraph include a natural transition, like a date, a sequence, or an addition?	Break the paragraph at that point and rewrite the topic sentence(s). AND Consider drafting an introductory paragraph and/or a forecasting statement.
- **shorter**	Does the content clearly overlap with that of a surrounding paragraph?	Combine the paragraphs. Work to make the sentences more concise or to find a more natural paragraph break.
2) Read the paragraph's first (topic) sentence.		
- **Does it NOT specifically and concisely summarize all of the paragraph's ideas?**	Revise the topic sentence. OR	
	Move the unrelated material in the paragraph to another surrounding paragraph. OR	

	Pull out the unrelated material and craft a new paragraph.	
- Does it NOT clearly transition from the previous paragraph?	Revise the topic sentence.	
3) Does the paragraph lack focus, seeming to cover several possibly unrelated topics.	Craft a topic sentence. OR	
	Outline the main ideas and either move them elsewhere or develop them more fully.	
4) Assess the paragraph's logic.		
- Does the paragraph lack a logical structure?	Use the organizational strategies and diagrams to create one.	
- Is the paragraph's logic NOT clearly conveyed?	Add transitions	