

## Editing: A Skydiver's View

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No, I've never jumped from a flying airplane. But "a bird's eye view" didn't seem quite right to describe this take on the types of editing you can perform on your fiction. Birds fly horizontally, to and fro; skydivers plunge vertically.

When you skydive, if you have the presence of mind to enjoy the scenery below, you start with a macro view—of hills and fields divided by snaking streams and roadway—like a patchwork quilt. As you plummet, your destination becomes clearer: an open field bordered by trees. When you pull the ripcord and your parachute blossoms, jerking you out of freefall (provided you have a chute and it works), you distinguish trees individually and the terrain of the wind-washed meadow, a woodchuck hustling for its hole, before you hit the ground and roll.

One type of editing is **revision by reduction**, and taking the skydiver's view, we can categorize these kinds of edits:

Type of Reduction	Description
<b>Greater</b>	Shorten or remove whole chapters, scenes, and paragraphs that don't further the story or contribute to the plot
<b>Lesser</b>	Shorten or eliminate superfluous, ineffective, or redundant sentences and words
<b>Micro</b>	Replace longer words with shorter ones

Next week, we'll investigate the greater reductions you can make to your fiction drafts.

**Source:** Cheney, Theodore A. Rees. *Getting the Words Right*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 1983.

—Lee Allen Howard