Editing and re-writing, or, how to get extra marks

Why does this matter?
Getting ideas and information down on paper is only part of the task. To get the best marks you need to make sure you have communicated clearly, and this involves editing to remove mistakes, and re-writing so that you are handing in your best efforts.

What's the difference between proofreading and editing?
Proofreading: Checking for mistakes
Editing: Checking to see if you've given the best answer you can

Edit first, then proofread. Otherwise you might miss any mistakes that you make when you re-write sections.

The editing process
1. Don't try to get it right on the first draft, just get your ideas and research written down.

2. Don't edit your writing on the same day you finish writing it, you need to step away and look at it when you're fresh. This means being organised!

3. Proofreading for mistakes and editing to re-write are two different things. Don't try to do them both at once.

4. Have a list of what you're looking for so you can be methodical, avoid missing anything, and avoid getting overwhelmed.

5. Editing well takes more concentration than you think, remove yourself from distractions.

6. Don't rush.

7. Print your writing double spaced and edit with a coloured pen so you can easily see the edits when you transfer them back to your digital document later.

8. Read the writing out loud, slowly. It's the best way to pick up on a lot of things that need fixing or re-writing.

9. Or try reading from the end so that you can focus on individual sentences and so familiarity doesn't make you miss things.

10. Get a fresh pair of eyes to look at it after you've edited, to check for anything you've missed.

A useful thing to do...
Make a copy of the document before you edit, and add the changes to the copy. That way if you decide later on you want to use sections from your original, it's still available.

What to look for when you're editing...

- Do all your paragraphs follow the MESL structure?

- Have you actually answered the question?

- You should have checked that the sentences flowed when you proofread, now check that the paragraphs/arguments flow smoothly from one to the next.

- Don't use long words just to make your work sound impressive, especially if you're using them incorrectly.

- Avoid the passive voice.

- Don't make your sentences too long. If they're longer than three lines, turn them into two sentences.

- Remove any details that don't support or link back to your thesis.

- Vary the structure and length of your sentences.

- If you submit a draft and your teacher gives you feedback, make any changes they suggest!

- Have you used enough sources to support your ideas?

- If it's a task that needs formal language, check that no contractions or conversational phrases have slipped in.

- Try to look at your work from the point of view of the reader rather than from your point of view as the writer.