

Revision Strategies & Checklist

As an essential part of the writing process, revision involves refining and adjusting your ideas. In contrast, editing and proofreading focus on polishing sentence-level writing, including grammar, punctuation, and format. Rather than a one-time task, revision is an ongoing part of the writing process often resulting in substantial changes. This handout provides common revision strategies and a general revision checklist, but always tailor your work to your audience and assignment.

Revision Strategies

Read It Aloud

Try reading your writing aloud to yourself or someone else. As you read aloud, pay attention to how your ideas support each other and relate to the main idea. Note areas where your ideas could be clearer. The purpose of this exercise is to gauge how effectively you are explaining and supporting your ideas.

Get a Second Opinion

To assess how your ideas are working, it can be helpful to have someone else read your paper. Ask a classmate, friend, or Writing Center tutor to read your paper and provide feedback. If you can, also have someone from your intended audience read and respond to it. The purpose of this exercise is to identify areas you can improve that you may have previously overlooked.

Reverse Outline

A reverse outline involves outlining an existing draft. Read one paragraph at a time and write down the paragraph's main idea. Continue this process. Once you have reviewed the whole paper, compare the outlined main ideas to the thesis statement or guiding statement. Do the main ideas work together to support your thesis or guiding statement? The purpose of this exercise is to strengthen your main arguments, ensure they support the thesis, and organize ideas more effectively.

Understand the Audience

After writing with your intended audience in mind, it is important to understand them further. For example, consider what biases, beliefs, or needs your audience might have. What can you do to better reach your audience? The purpose of this exercise is to improve how you address your audience.

Free Write

Identify what ideas you would like to develop further. Take some time to write about those ideas away from your draft. Once you have written for an allotted time, consider the ideas you expressed in the free write. How can you build on or expand them? The purpose of this exercise is to refine your ideas.

Print It Out

When revising for organization, printing out your paper allows you to physically mark problem places. For example, you can create a color-coded key marking the main point, evidence, and analysis. The purpose of this exercise is to carefully read your writing and understand the effectiveness of your organization.

Revision Checklist

When revising, follow this checklist to determine the effectiveness of your writing. Depending on the type of paper you are writing, some points will be more applicable than others. The purpose of this exercise is to target areas in your paper that need additional revision. You can also make an appointment at the Writing Center to go through this checklist with a tutor.

Purpose

- The paper fits assignment guidelines as outlined by your instructor
- The paper meets genre conventions
- The purpose and scope of the paper are clear, specific, and concise

Audience

- The paper is directed towards a specific audience
- The paper gives necessary background information for readers to understand your claims
- Key terms are defined for your audience
- The paper acknowledges different viewpoints and responds to them
- Feedback has been addressed and incorporated into your paper

Content & Organization

- The title is descriptive, precise, and content-oriented
- The introduction contextualizes the paper and leads to the thesis or guiding statement
- The thesis or guiding statement sets up the main idea or argument of your paper
- Each topic sentence introduces the main idea of the paragraph and ties back to the thesis
- Each body paragraph provides evidence to build on the main idea of the paragraph
- Each body paragraph includes your own analysis that fully develops your ideas
- The concluding sentence ties the body paragraph back to the thesis or guiding statement
- Topic or concluding sentences may be used to transition from one body paragraph to another
- The conclusion of the paper revisits main ideas, explains significance, and provides closure

Source Use

- Source material is effectively incorporated and does not overshadow your own ideas
- Sources are credible and appropriate for your genre and audience
- Sources are cited accurately both in-text and in the references or works cited list

Style

- Each paragraph contains sentences of varied length and structure
- Your paper uses transitions to move smoothly from one idea to the next
- Your writing is clear, concise, and cohesive

Editing (After Revision)

- Your writing is free of spelling and grammatical errors
- Sentences are complete and punctuated appropriately
- Your paper is correctly formatted in the required style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)