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Revising Your Paper

Gabriela Gomez

The purpose of this article is to aid in revising your paper through second or third drafts so that you can better evaluate your writing, assess what needs editing, and ensure your work is ready to be turned in.

“There’s No Such Thing as Good Writing...Only Good Rewriting”

After any paper is finished, but before submission, comes the essential task of revision. Many writers would prefer to skip this step, but we miss so many unintentional errors if we turn in a first draft unedited. Worse, we miss the opportunity to think about other perspectives or how we might improve our words to have the maximum impact on our readers. In many ways, revision serves as a quality check, ensuring that the whole of your paper is communicating your point effectively.

In the editing process, there is a difference between proofreading and revision. Both serve to clean up your paper’s content but at different levels. Proofreading focuses mostly on grammar and mechanics, making sure the paper follows conventions of punctuation for smoother reading. Revision, on the other hand, means to “re-envision,” to think about your paper from a fresh perspective. It contains edits in various sizes, from rewriting a sentence for clarity to reformatting and reorganizing a paragraph to utilize its information better. Revisions address a paper’s core message and check that each part contributes to the reader’s understanding of this point.

Steps for Revision

Before revising, it is good to approach your paper with a fresh set of eyes, so take a break! Stepping away and waiting at least an hour after writing your paper before you begin revising it will help you catch more errors. Given the length and weight of the writing, the “stepping away” time may vary, so take this into consideration.

At the beginning of revision, it is important that you establish what you want to accomplish with your paper and understand how this is being communicated to your reader. Are you evaluating researched information? Are you arguing against it? How are you trying to convince your reader? Questions such as these can help you pinpoint the **purpose** behind your paper. Then, begin by identifying the main point found in your **thesis statement**. Is this thesis clear? Does the thesis summarize what this paper is about? How can it be written more clearly?

After confirming your thesis and the intent behind your paper, begin by reading through the **topic sentences** of each paragraph. Make sure that they tie back to your thesis statement since they guide your reader through the discussion. If not, take the time to reword or reformat the sentences as needed, keeping in mind their relation to the thesis. Continuing, review the **evidence** in your paper and how your **claims and analysis** interact with the evidence. How does each paragraph present its respective information? What evidence have you pulled from outside sources? Does more evidence need to be included? With any adjustments, keep in mind the clarity of information and how it will be read. It can be helpful to “Read your paper out loud” or have someone else read through your paper.

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These methods will not only help you catch any errors but also ensure that each part is working to effectively communicate your main idea.

When the bulk of the revision has been completed, **proofreading** brings the process to a close. Proofreading checks your paper for surface-level mistakes in grammar, spelling, and punctuation and should not be skipped. In rhetorical writing, the reader and their understanding should be at the forefront of your concerns; thus, your writing should draw them in and reveal the pieces of the story being told.

Conclusion

With any paper, it is important to set aside time to revise what has been written. Revisions help reimagine the paper's purpose, assess the paper's content, and ensure the claims and evidence support your thesis. Alongside revision, proofreading is vital to catch any minor errors. The revision process allows you to analyze your paper's content, make adjustments as needed, and ensure that your paper is ready to be submitted.

Tips

1. After finishing your paper, take a break and step away so you can come back to your paper with fresh eyes.
2. Identify your main point and the intent behind your paper. Re-read the prompt and evaluate your work to make sure it meets the requirements of the assignment.
3. Proofread to catch any minor errors and review your citations.
4. Because it is a process, revision may take hours or days, depending on your paper's length. Set aside ample time to review what you have written and thoughtfully rewrite the paper.

Works Consulted

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