

One of the central processes in writing is revision, though many college writers do not revise enough, give themselves enough time for revision, nor know what revision entails. What does it mean to revise, to edit, and to proofread?

**Revision** indicates that changes be made at a fundamental level. In an argumentative essay, the central claim, supporting claims, unwritten assumptions, evidence, analysis, definitions of key terms, and overall structure of the piece are all up for scrutiny and improvement when you revise. Revision should be specific, substantive, and strategic.

**Editing** has to do with issues like paragraphing, sentence structure, word choice, grammar, transitions, and the other choices writers make to develop and clearly communicate their ideas in writing. Editing is also about tone and style.

**Proofreading** is the stage at which issues of formatting, mechanics, spelling, and so on are addressed. In other words, if it doesn't look good, you don't look good.

## I. Revision

Work from big to small issues, from higher-order issues to lower-order issues:

### CLAIMS

- Is my claim clear?
- What is at stake in my claim? Why is it important in an academic context? Am I being analytical enough (and not just summarizing)? Does it answer the “so what” or “this is important because” questions?
- Does my paper support my claim specifically with evidence?
- Do my sub-claims relate back to my main claim? Do they answer the “so what” question?

### ORGANIZATION

- Do all my paragraphs have a purpose that relates to my claim?
- Do I have a clear introduction that anticipates my following organization?
- Do I have a conclusion?
- Is there a natural progression in the paper?
- Do I use transitions to remind my readers where they have been and where they are going?

### SOURCES

- Have I properly introduced my quotations by recognizing the author and the article/book/etc where the quote is from originally?
- Do my quotes function as evidence to support my claim?
- Have I correctly cited all my quotations and paraphrases?
- Do I use my source as evidence to support my own claim, or do I just summarize the argument from the source?

## II. Editing

Think about the structure and language of your paper.

### PARAGRAPHS

- Do I have topic sentences that introduce the main theme of the paragraph and show connections between paragraphs?

### SENTENCES

- Do I choose the words that best describe the ideas that I am trying to get across to my reader?
- Do I use an academic tone?
- Does the length of my sentences vary?
- Do I follow rules of grammar?
- Do I use complete sentences (and not sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and comma splices)?

## III. Proofreading

Pay attention to detail, mechanics, and manuscript conventions.

### FORMATTING

- Do I adhere to the MLA style guide citing quotations?
- Do I have a Works Cited page?
- Have I used the agreed upon format for papers?

## Helpful Revision Activities

- 1. Underline your claim.** It should me more than one sentence. It should also signal to your reader what your paper is about, and the stakes involved in your argument.
- 2. Write the topic/sub-claim of each paragraph in the margins.** Make sure that the topic is related to your main claim and sub-claims. These topics and sub-claims should provide support for your argument.
- 3. Check for a natural progression.** After outlining your paragraphs, make sure the sub-claims you identify more from weakest to strongest as your paper progresses, with the climax of your paper coming right before the conclusion.
- 4. Read your paper aloud.** Often times this can help you identify awkward sentences, or missed words.
- 5. Work Backwards.** If you examine a sentence from the end forward, you focus on the words, not on the content.
- 6. Double check spelling.** REMEMBER: your computer can't tell the difference between "their books" and "there books," but you can.
- 7. Have someone you trust look over your paper.** If you have a peer or tutor or instructor who you trust, go to them with specific things for them to help you with.