

Revising



When you finish writing your essay, you should revise it. Revising your essay means that you make changes to your essay to improve it. After you revise what you wrote, you may need to return to either of the previous stages (prewriting or writing) to make improvements to your writing.

Many people divide the revising stage into revising and editing. When they make this distinction, **revising** focuses on making changes to improve the clarity of your ideas and organization. **Editing** focuses on making changes to improve the clarity of your grammar. Revising ideas, logic, and organization should generally be completed before editing grammar and mechanics.

Here are some questions you can use when you are revising your essays, giving feedback to a peer, or evaluating a sample essay:

1. Does the introduction provide the general information a reader needs in order to understand the topic?
2. Does the introduction end with an effective thesis? Does it match the style of the essay?
3. Do each of the body paragraphs begin with an effective topic sentence?
4. Are the body paragraphs sequenced in a logical order?
5. Look at each body paragraph. Do the supporting sentences support the topic sentence?
6. Look at each body paragraph. Are the supporting sentences sequenced in a logical order?
7. Look at each body paragraph. Is there enough development? Are there more details or examples that would help the reader?
8. Look at each body paragraph. Does the concluding sentence close the paragraph logically?
9. Does the conclusion paragraph start by restating the thesis?
10. Does the conclusion paragraph have a suggestion, prediction, or opinion at the end?

Self-check

You should always read through your essay to identify mistakes you have made. Try to finish your drafting with enough time to leave your essay and then come back to it to make revisions. As you revise your own work, you may need to add, delete, or move text. Mark any parts of your essay that you want to ask a friend/tutor to help you with. You should also proofread for mechanical errors (spelling, grammar, etc.). You may be surprised how many errors you are able to identify on your own. Here are some strategies for proofreading:

1. Start by simply reading through your essay for typos.
2. Look through your essay for basic grammar that you know well. For example, you can check to make sure every sentence has a subject and a verb (and that they agree).
3. If you are not writing for a test, try reading your writing out loud. This may help you identify more errors as you hear what your writing sounds like.

Get feedback and make changes

If you are not writing for a test, have a friend or a tutor review your writing before you submit it to your teacher. Then use the feedback you get to make changes.

Peer Review



Peer review is an activity you complete by reading something that one of your classmates has written and giving them feedback about their writing. Peer review can be a very powerful tool for you as a reviewer because you get to see how readers experience writing. You can see how ideas need to connect logically and you understand how a reader feels when there is not enough support.

It can also be useful for you as a writer because you get an outside perspective on your writing and you can find out where your ideas may not be connected or supported well enough.

As you give feedback, there are a few guidelines to keep in mind.

1. **Give specific feedback.** Don't say things like "This paragraph is confusing" or "This thesis is great." Give specific reasons or details when you are giving feedback like "This thesis statement is really clear. It is specific and matches the style of the essay really well."
2. **Focus on revising before editing.** Try to look past grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors to focus on the ideas in what you read. Look for how ideas are supported, developed, and connected.
3. **Find both positive and negative things to give feedback on.** Don't just focus on problems. Find things that were also done well.

As you receive feedback, there are also some guidelines you should keep in mind.

1. **Ask questions.** If there are sections you don't understand, ask the writer for clarification.
2. **Listen to understand before you revise.** You aren't necessarily going to take every suggestion that your peer gives you, but you should listen to understand all of the suggestions. Once you understand them, you can decide what you will use in your revisions.

If your teacher gives you feedback on a draft before the final draft of your essay is due, make sure you use it to improve your essay. Ask questions about feedback that you do not understand. More than just improving your essay, understanding feedback from a teacher will improve your ability to write in the future.

Many teachers use symbols like the following to mark specific types of errors. If your teacher uses codes, make sure you clearly understand what the codes mean and how to fix the error.

| Symbol | Code |
|--------|---------------------|
| TH | Thesis |
| TS | Topic Sentence |
| SS | Supporting Sentence |
| CS | Concluding Sentence |
| UN | Unity |
| DEV | Development |

| | |
|----|----------|
| CO | Cohesion |
| EX | Example |
| SP | Spelling |
| CL | Clarity |



This content is provided to you freely by BYU Open Learning Network.

Access it online or download it at https://open.byu.edu/academic_a_writing/revising.