

Strategies for Revising Your Writing

When you have plenty of time to revise, use the time not only to work on your paper, but also to take occasional breaks from it. If you can forget about your draft for a day or two, you may return to it with a fresh outlook. During a thorough revising process, put your writing aside at least twice - once during the first part of the process, when you are re-organizing your work, and once during the second part, when you are polishing and paying attention to details.

Use the following questions to critically evaluate your drafts. You can use your responses to revise your papers by reorganizing them to make your best points stand out, by adding needed information, by eliminating irrelevant information, and by clarifying sections or sentences.

- **Find your main point.**
What are you trying to say in the paper? In other words, try to summarize your thesis, or main point, and the evidence you are using to support that point. Try to imagine that this paper belongs to someone else. Does the paper have a clear thesis? Do you know what the paper is going to be about?
- **Get your readers and purpose clearly in mind.**
What are you trying to do in the paper? In other words, are you trying to argue with the reading, to analyze the reading, to evaluate the reading, to apply the reading to another situation, or to accomplish another goal?
- **Evaluate your evidence.**
Does the body of your paper support your thesis? Do you offer enough evidence to support your claim? If you are using quotations from the text as evidence, did you cite them properly?
- **Save only the good pieces.**
Do all of the ideas relate back to the thesis? Is there anything that doesn't seem to fit? If so, you either need to either change your thesis to reflect the idea, or cut the idea out.
- **Tighten and clean up your language.**
Do all of the ideas in the paper make sense? Are there any unclear or confusing ideas or sentences? Read your paper out loud and listen for awkward phrases and unclear ideas. Cut out extra words, vagueness, and misused words.
- **Get rid of mistakes in grammar and usage.**
Do you see any problems with grammar, punctuation, or spelling? If you think that something is wrong, you should make a note of it, even if you don't know how to fix it; you can always talk to a Writing Center tutor about how to correct errors.
- **Switch from Writer-Consciousness to Reader-Consciousness.**
Try to detach yourself from what you've written; pretend that you are reviewing someone else's work. What would you say is the most successful part of your paper? Why? How could this part be made even better? What would you say is the least successful part of your paper? Why? How could this part be improved?