

Lecture 9.

Editing and Revising

Learning Objectives

9.1 Identify major areas of concern in the draft essay during revising and editing.

9.2 Use peer reviews and editing checklists to assist revising and editing.

9.3 Revise and edit the first draft of your essay and produce a final draft.

Revising and editing are the two tasks you undertake to significantly improve your essay. Both are very important elements of the writing process. You may think that a completed first draft means little improvement is needed. However, even experienced writers need to improve their drafts and rely on peers during revising and editing. You may know that athletes miss catches, fumble balls, or overshoot goals. Dancers forget steps, turn too slowly, or miss beats. For both athletes and dancers, the more they practice, the stronger their performance will become. Web designers seek better images, a more clever design, or a more appealing background for their web pages. Writing has the same capacity to profit from improvement and revision.

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

Revising and editing allow you to examine two important aspects of your writing separately, so that you can give each task your undivided attention.

- When you revise, you take a second look at your ideas. You might add, cut, move, or change information in order to make your ideas clearer, more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing.
- When you edit, you take a second look at how you expressed your ideas. You add or change words. You fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You improve your writing style. You make your essay into a polished, mature piece of writing, the end product of your best efforts.

Tip

How do you get the best out of your revisions and editing? Here are some strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them over the course of this semester; then keep using the ones that bring results. Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.

Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.

Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?

Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.

Many people hear the words *critic*, *critical*, and *criticism* and pick up only negative vibes that provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

Creating Unity and Coherence

Following your outline closely offers you a reasonable guarantee that your writing will stay on purpose and not drift away from the controlling idea. However, when writers are rushed, are tired, or cannot find the right words, their writing may become less than they want it to be. Their writing may no longer be clear and concise, and they may be adding information that is not needed to develop the main idea.

When a piece of writing has unity, all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense. When the writing has coherence, the ideas flow smoothly. The wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph.

Tip

Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence. Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes.

Creating Unity

Sometimes writers get caught up in the moment and cannot resist a good digression. Even though you might enjoy such detours when you chat with friends, unplanned digressions usually harm a piece of writing.

Mariah stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled “Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?” But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset her enough that she digressed from the main topic of her third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited. When she revised her essay, she deleted the off-topic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph.

Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Mariah’s changes, and the second time with them.

Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ~~You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs.~~ You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won’t be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. ~~The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions.~~ The other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. ~~But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints.~~ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don’t ~~let someone make you~~ by more television than you need!

Tip

When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity. Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

Writing at Work

Many companies hire copyeditors and proofreaders to help them produce the cleanest possible final drafts of large writing projects. Copyeditors are responsible for suggesting revisions and style changes; proofreaders check documents for any errors in capitalization, spelling, and punctuation that have crept in. Many times, these tasks are done on a freelance basis, with one freelancer working for a variety of clients.

Creating Coherence

Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature feel to your essays. Table 8.3 “Common Transitional Words and Phrases” groups many common transitions according to their purpose. After Maria revised for unity, she next examined her paragraph about televisions to check for coherence. She looked for places where she needed to add a transition or perhaps reword the text to make the flow of ideas clear. In the version that follows, she has already deleted the sentences that were off topic.

Tip

Many writers make their revisions on a printed copy and then transfer them to the version on-screen. They conventionally use a small arrow called a caret (^) to show where to insert an addition or correction.

Finally,
^Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDtelevision) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ^There's good reason for this confusion: You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. ^The first big decision is the screen resolution you want. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The ^second ^other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD. ^Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. ^However, Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need!

Writing is an essential part of research, and every student spends time learning how to write. But just knowing how to write isn't enough. To create perfectly polished work, even the best writers spend time revising, editing, and proofreading their work. Many people use these three terms interchangeably, but in fact they are very different processes.

So what's the difference between revising, proofreading and editing, and do you need to pay someone to do them for you? Let's talk about what it means to revise, edit, and proofread a paper, some tools that can help, and why you should do all three of these steps each time you write.

What is Revising?

After you've written a first draft of the paper, the first step you'll want to take is to revise your work. Revision begins with a re-read of your work and is focused on big picture changes like organization, flow, transitions, evidence, and content.

When you read your work again, ask yourself if any content needs to be added or removed. Are all of your claims backed up with sufficient evidence? Are you missing any citations? Does the organization of the writing make sense? Does the logic flow smoothly from one section to the next? Are there any transitions that need to be reworked?

When you revise your paper, it's an opportunity to really interrogate your work and fix any major problems that you find. You don't need to worry so much about typographical errors or word choice at this stage—you'll fix those problems later.

Right now, ask yourself if you can follow your argument and whether you've provided the appropriate facts and citations to support it. This is the time to delete or add sections of writing, move paragraphs around, and generally make any big changes that are necessary.

What is Editing?

Once you've finished revising your paper, it's time for the editing stage. If revising is about making big, sweeping changes to the structure and organization of your paper as a whole, editing is about making changes to sentence structure and phrasing. Editing focuses on whether your writing clearly conveys what you want to say.

As you edit, you should examine word choice, whether any sentences are too long or short, and whether punctuation is correctly applied. This is also the stage during which you should ensure that your paper follows the appropriate citation format.

Does your paper need to conform to the MLA, APA, or Chicago styles? Have you formatted your headings in the appropriate title case? Is your bibliography properly organized in accordance with your paper's citation style? Is the tone of your paper suitable for your audience? All of these issues should be addressed in the editing stage.

What is Proofreading?

Once you've finished editing, it's time to proofread your paper. Proofreading is the final review to catch any minor errors that were missed in the revising and editing stages. When you proofread, you should be looking for any spelling errors that a traditional spellchecker won't catch (writing "form" instead of "from," for example), capitalization and punctuation errors, and formatting issues.

This is the time to get very fussy about details. Page breaks, table of contents, font, sizing, headings, citation formatting, punctuation inside or outside quotation marks, consistency—you should make sure all of these are correct while you proofread.

By the time you've reached the proofreading stage, you have probably spent a lot of time reading and re-reading your own work. This means it can be easy to miss minor errors because you know what it is you intend to say, and your brain can trick you into not seeing your own mistakes.

For this reason, it is usually best to spend at least two to three days away from your paper before you proofread it. That way, you can look at it with fresh eyes. It can also help to divide up your paper into sections and proofread it, read it out loud, or ask a friend or colleague to help you out.

Do You Really Need to Revise, Edit, and Proofread?

Do you really need to revise, edit, AND proofread your paper? It can seem like overkill to read and re-read your own work over and over looking for mistakes. But in fact, all of these steps are essential to ensuring that your writing is the best that it can be. All three of these steps address different problems with your writing, and skipping any of them is likely to result in avoidable errors making it into your final draft. Even the best quality research can fail to make an impact if the writing is of poor quality or difficult to follow.

If you aren't confident in your ability to revise, edit, and/or proofread your own writing, there are numerous professional academic editing services available. These services offer careful reviews by professional editors in every academic field, and you can select which service you need.

Alternatively, there are many great AI writing tools that can help improve your writing as well. AI writing tools like Trinko that are specifically targeted toward academic writing will check to make sure that technical terms are used properly and citations are accurately formatted.

Whether you choose to use an AI writing tool, hire a professional, or revise, edit, and proofread your own work, doing so will certainly improve your writing and enhance your chances of being published.

Contrast Transition Words

• Although	• Conversely	• Regardless	• Despite all this	• Nevertheless,	• Even if it means
• However	• Although this may	• Albeit	• Granted	despite	• In actual fact
• But	be true	• However, on the	• Wherever	• That being said	• In the final
• On the other	• Even so	contrary	• Instead of	• For all that	analysis
hand	• Still	• Notwithstanding	• In contrast to	• Equally important	• Regardless of
• In contrast	• Instead	• While this may be	• In the same way	• In the final	• But then again
• Nevertheless	• In any case	true	• In any event	analysis	• On the other side
• Even though	• Nevertheless	• On one hand	• Although it is true	• While it may be	• As opposed to
• Nonetheless	• By contrast	• Yet still	• Although some	true	• While it is true
• While	• Despite that	• Even if	people believe	• Whereas, although	• With this in mind
• Whereas	• At the same time	• Whereas, but	• But still	• Even though it	• On the one side
• Despite	• Unlike	• Though	• Despite the fact	may seem	• As an alternative
• Yet	• On the contrary	• After all	• By way of contrast	• Even supposing	• As long as
• Rather than	• Conversely	• Even as	• No matter how	• Granted that	• As a matter of fact
• In spite of	• In comparison	• By the same token	• Above all	• As much as	• In reality

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