

Revision Strategies

Principles

Revision is about seeing new possibilities in your work. Imagine you are looking at your room and thinking how it could look with different kinds of furniture arranged differently. Each idea in your essay is a piece of furniture.

There are four main revision skills to develop:

1. seeing what the words don't yet say but want to say
2. seeing the potential shape that would make everything click
3. seeing a simpler way to say something
4. seeing bits you can leave out, even though you love them

A few things to keep in mind:

- you don't have to take my suggestions
- you should, however, make a conscious decision about the issues I raise
- visualizing the audience and the effect you want to have on them might help you
- revision is most effective when you have more than you can use
- reading your paper out loud will help you identify places to revise
- you should clearly show your revisions by highlighting or underlining your changes
- turning in a revision with only minor changes disrespects my time and won't be reviewed

Tip One: Use Your Feedback

- **Read** peer and instructor feedback at least twice
- **Ask** for clarifications and examples of anything that is unclear
- **Prioritize** issues to fix in a revision

Tip Two: Revise in Stages

- Create a list of things to look at
- Work down your list one at a time
- Alternatively, revise each paragraph or section one at a time
- Don't rush. Approach each section as a work of art; you're a sculptor

Tip Three: Give Yourself Space to Think

- Divide the essay or story into parts
- Put white space around each of these parts and print
- Find the focus of that section and start writing new ideas and sentences around the edges

Tip Four: Verbally Process

- Find a friend, teacher, parent to be a sounding board
- Explain your paper as succinctly as possible
- Listen to what types of questions come up
- Take copious notes

Tip Five: Let It Sit

- Give yourself at least 24 hours after you finish before starting to revise
- Clarify the problem you are trying to fix or question you are trying to answer
- Do something else and let that question or problem percolate

Tip Six: Ask Yourself Questions About Each Level of Writing

High level

- What is the purpose of this particular piece of writing?
- Who is my audience? What is an appropriate style or tone to use?
- What am I trying to say? What is my main point or thesis?
- What main arguments or evidence am I using to support this main point?

Middle Level

- What is the best and most engaging sequence for my points?
- Does each main section have a focusing sentence?
- Does each paragraph have a topic sentence?
- Do I provide concrete examples or explanatory details for abstract points?
- Do I provide analysis and interpretation for my evidence?
- Do I address counterarguments to bolster my own position?
- Do my transitions flow? Do I use transitional phrases to move between topics?
- Does my introduction have a strong hook? Does it clearly state my thesis? Does it include a forecasting statement that outlines my main points?
- Does my conclusion provide an effective summary? Does it answer the "so what?" question? Does it raise new and interesting questions for the reader to ponder?
- Does my description come with concrete imagery?
- Have I chosen effective scenes with specific details to convey my meaning?

Close Level

- Have I used complete sentences throughout the paper?
- Are my verb tenses consistent through the paper?
- Have I eliminated misspellings, typos, duplicate, and missing words?
- Am I using all my punctuation to its full potential?
- Am I using strong verbs and specific nouns?
- Have I eliminated unnecessary adjectives and adverbs?
- Have I minimized use of the passive voice?
- Have I cited sources correctly throughout the document?