



WRITING CENTER

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Tips for Revising Your Work

The revision process is one that many writers, both students and professionals, try to avoid. It's hard to look at something you've spent so much time drafting and think about potentially cutting or changing a lot of it. Or, maybe you've left the drafting process too late and have run out of time to revise!

Whatever your personal block about revision, it is a very important part of the writing process that you'll want to get used to. The writer E.M. Forster once said, when asked what he thought about a certain topic, "How do I know what I think until I see what I say?" You'll find this to be true for yourself as well. The drafting process helps you get all your thoughts down on paper, but often you don't have that crystal-clear argument until somewhere near the end. Once you get it, it's time to revise the rest of your draft to match your awesome conclusions.

Here are some tips for helping your revision process be as smooth and efficient as possible:

- ❖ **Take some time** between finishing a draft and going back to revise it
 - Trying to revise something right after you've finished writing it is a mistake
 - Let your brain flush out everything it was just concentrating on (overnight, a week, however long you need) and come back later fresh and sharp
- ❖ While revising, **read aloud to yourself**
 - Use your ears in conjunction with your eyes to catch mistakes that your brain would miss on its own
 - If what you hear does not match what you read, the brain will catch on it
- ❖ **Have someone else read over the paper:** a friend, classmate, or Writing Center tutor
 - Your brain is biased and will gloss over any mistakes you made because of its own personal version of auto-correct
 - Having someone else read over the paper will let you know if any part is weirdly worded or makes no sense
- ❖ Try writing a **reverse outline**
 - Read over your draft with a blank sheet of paper next to you for notes
 - As you read, outline what you're reading. Note topic sentences, evidence used, analysis of evidence, transitions, etc.
 - When you're done, compare your new outline to the one you made before drafting. See if they match up. See if it makes sense. Taking notes on your own

work in this way will help you catch mistakes or inconsistencies that you might not otherwise have seen.

Tips for Editing Your Work

First, it's important to note that there is a difference between revision and editing. We often think of them as the same thing, but they're really separate parts of the writing process and it will be helpful for you to do them separately.

Always revise your work first (that's why it comes first on this tips sheet). Revision asks you to look at what we call "global issues" in your paper; that is, things at the whole-essay level like your thesis, structure, evidence, or conclusion. Editing, on the other hand, looks at sentence-level problems like grammar, typos, and word choice. You'll always want to revise first, because it will feel a little silly to spend 20 minutes editing a paragraph, only to decide to delete it when you're revising your bigger ideas!

Here are some tips for your editing process:

- ❖ **Always double-space a draft** unless explicitly asked to do otherwise
 - Whether editing on a computer or on a printed draft, this will make it easier to catch and correct errors
- ❖ **Use a different color** to edit (or revise) than you did to write the draft
- ❖ **When editing on a computer**
 - Keep in mind that staring at a computer screen all day can cause your eyes to go swimmy, so be sure to step away once in awhile
 - Save all your past drafts in case you want to change something back or need to submit them as part of a portfolio
 - Don't be afraid to use editing helpers like Word's "Spellcheck" or the popular site "Grammarly." Always double-check any changes these services make yourself, but there's nothing wrong with them as a starting point.

Still having trouble with revision or editing?
Make an appointment with the Writing Center!
Library, Room 311/312
www.bradley.edu/writeright