



The Writing Center

Revision as a Reader



Skipping the revision process, either because of lack of time or difficulty, is not a good idea since this can lead to unclear writing or lower scores. In fact, the revision process is one of the most important steps in writing.

If you typically avoid revision because it is difficult, try to revise from a different perspective other than the writer. Instead, revise as a reader—of your own writing. Revising from the perspective of a reader is helpful because it provides the distance you'll need to thoroughly “fine tune” your writing before handing in your paper. Essentially, imagine that you are a reader and that someone else wrote your paper. Follow these guidelines:

I. Part one: Spend time away from the essay.

Pull away for a short time to focus on other tasks, such as chores or other classes. A day or two would be best, but several hours can work as well. The goal is to provide enough distance to see your paper as another writer's work.

II. Part two: Return in a format that is comfortable.

Revision and writing can be difficult, so make it as comfortable as possible. If you work best on the computer, then do so. If you enjoy working in bed, print the essay and work on it using pens, highlighters, post-its, and/or flags. Make revision enjoyable so it is easier to return to.

III. Part three: View the work as if not your own, focusing on the global issues first.

Treat your paper as if it is another student's writing. Is the thesis clear? Is the introduction interesting, catching your attention? How strong are the arguments and use of examples, along with structure? Refer to your outline in order to ensure that you are following an organized essay structure.

IV. Part four: Work towards editing sentence level issues.

Once ready, focus on the grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and spelling errors. Are your ideas confusing due to run-ons, comma-splices, and fragments? In addition, omit any repetitive or empty words and phrases. These simply clutter stronger ideas.

V. Part five: Print out the essay and proofread using a colorful pen or highlighter.

In this final step, do not be afraid to get messy and write on the printed essay. By printing it, you will be able to clearly see areas in need of deeper revision and editing.

Revision is where a piece of writing really grows stronger, yet the process takes time and effort. Have someone else read the essay at the end of the revision process to see what you might have left behind. However, it is best if you are the first person to critique your own work.