

Revising and Copyediting

Revising deals with the meaning and structure of your essay, while **copyediting** deals with its surface. Always revise and edit your paper. Start early so you'll have time. Never turn in a first draft.

Revision Checklist

After your first draft is complete, begin to revise. Examine the following aspects of the paper:

- **Purpose:** What is the essay's purpose? Does that purpose satisfy the requirements of your assignment? Is your purpose consistent throughout the essay?
- **Thesis:** What is the thesis (the main idea or claim you make)? Does the paper follow through to develop or prove the thesis? If not, change either the thesis or the paper.
- **Structure:** What are the main points of the paper? If you didn't make an outline before starting to write, or even if you did, create an outline now of your actual draft, with a heading for every main point and/or paragraph. Check the outline for logical sequence, relevance of each point, and completeness.
- **Development:** How well do the details, examples, and other evidence support your main points?
- **Unity:** Does each sentence and paragraph contribute to the thesis? If not, cut out the sentence and consider the overall purpose of the paragraph.
- **Coherence:** How clear are your main points? Does your discussion move smoothly from one point to the next? Is the meaning of each sentence clear?
- **Tone:** What is the paper's tone? (Tone shows the writer's attitudes toward the reader and the subject of the essay. Tone may be formal or casual, rational or angry, positive or negative, serious or silly or ironic, etc.) Is your tone appropriate for the purpose, topic, and audience of your essay?
- **Title, Introduction, and Conclusion:** How accurate and interesting is the title? How well does the introduction engage the reader's attention? How well does it present the topic of the paper? How effective is the conclusion in providing a sense of completion?

Copyediting Checklist

After revising your paper, begin the copyediting process. Look at the following:

- **Clarity:** How well do the words and sentences convey their intended meaning? Check for well-placed modifiers, clear pronoun references, and complete sentences.
- **Effectiveness:** How well do the words and sentences engage and direct the reader's attention? Check especially for smooth transitions and appropriate word usage. If you do not know what a word means, do not use it.
- **Correctness:** How much do surface errors interfere with clarity and effectiveness? Check for spelling and typographical errors, and for grammar issues like subject/verb agreement, proper punctuation when you join two complete sentences together, consistency with verb tenses, comma usage, and possessive nouns and pronouns.

Read the paper out loud to yourself. **Try to detach yourself** from what you've written; pretend you are reviewing another person's work. After the initial revisions and edits, **take your paper to someone else** for a fresh perspective. Be aware that your paper may need **multiple revisions**.