Revising Your Rough Draft

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Revising Your Rough Draft

After the first draft is done, you will need to revise your paper. Good papers are never merely written; they are rewritten. Here is a checklist for you to consider when revising your rough draft.

1. Polish your argument.

   **Check your introduction.** Since ideas often change somewhat during the writing process, go over your introduction to make sure it fits the paper you ended up writing. Is your thesis clear? Does your thesis paragraph give your reader a sense of how your argument will proceed? Does it point in some way to your conclusion? An effective introduction not only states your thesis; it gives your reader a sense of the arc of your argument from beginning to end.

   **Examine transitions.** Check the beginnings of paragraphs where your argument moves from one point to the next. Do these transitions help the reader keep your thesis in mind? Do they connect the previous paragraph to the new one?

   **Examine your use of textual evidence.** Do you comment on quotations? Do you show the reader how the text supports your argument? Do not rely on the text to argue your point for you. Show your reader your interpretive skills.

   **Examine your conclusion.** Does it place your thesis in a new light? Does it examine the assumptions or values at work in the text? Does it consider how the author of the text may be commenting upon an issue related to your thesis? Avoid merely repeating your thesis.

   **Avoid plagiarism.** Be responsible about citing any sources other than your own ideas. Keep in mind that plagiarism is a serious academic offense.

II. Polish your language

   **Eliminate wordiness.**

   Before revision: “Beauty’s realization is that she learns that a beautiful exterior which is only skin-deep is not the thing you should pay attention to.”

   After revision: “Beauty learns to see beyond appearances.”
Check your grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Proofread your work. Common errors: run-on sentences; confusing semi-colons and colons; inserting commas every time you pause when writing; confusing the possessive form with the plural form. Invest in a good grammar book if you’re unclear about these common errors.

Make your writing lively. Write in the present tense and avoid passive constructions. In passive constructions, the subject or agent of the action disappears from the sentence.

Before revision: “The father was consoled.”
After revision: “Beauty consoles her father.”

III. Be accurate.

Quote the text precisely. If you change the text in any way, place altered words or letters in brackets. If you omit part of a quotation, use the ellipsis (three spaced periods). Consult a grammar book if you have questions about how to insert quotations into your text.

Check for proper manuscript form. Double-space your papers unless explicitly told otherwise by your professor. Maintain double-spacing even if your paper is longer than it is supposed to be. Papers that are single-spaced or one-and-a-half spaced are hard to read. It is also hard for professors to write comments on papers that have closely packed text. For similar reasons, use the standard font size of 12 point. Put your name at the top of every page and number your pages. Make sure your document has one-inch margins on either side and at the top and bottom. Staple your pages together.

Check your spelling! Make sure the title of the text under discussion and the author’s name are spelled correctly. For that matter, make sure you have spelled your professor’s name correctly. Run your document through a spell-check program, but be aware that the program will not catch errors such as typing “mouth” for “month,” since both are words.