

Approaches to Revising a Draft

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You just finished your first draft, but before turning it in you should do one more thing: **revise**. Here are some easy ways to help you look back over your draft and polish it.

First, take a break.

In order to gain a fresh perspective, set your draft aside. "Revision" means reseeing, or seeing again. Thinking about something else will give your mind a rest so you can return to the draft refreshed.

I. Assess Your First Draft by using one or both of the following strategies:

- A. On your draft, highlight or underline your thesis, topic sentences, and main ideas. This will help you to visualize and acknowledge your main points.
- B. On a separate sheet of paper create an outline of your first draft. Write down your thesis, topic sentence, and main ideas.

*Make notes in the margins about **overall meaning and structure** and **paragraph development**. Ask yourself, "Why should the reader care about this topic?" "What is the bigger point that I am trying to make?" "Why is this statement significant?"

II. The Big Picture: Overall Meaning and Structure

In the first stage of the revision process, the writer should read the draft quickly to assess its overall meaning (content) and structure (organization).

- A. Content: check to make sure that
 1. your thesis is significant: it introduces a new, interesting idea.
 2. your thesis is arguable: could someone feasibly take an opposing view?
 3. the language and ideas of your thesis is reiterated throughout the essay.
 4. your points are developed with specific examples.
- B. Organization: check to make sure that
 1. your ideas flow logically from one paragraph to another.
 2. your ideas on a specific topic or point are grouped in one section of the essay.
 3. your points are organized with a clear purpose in mind.
 4. your points serve as support or proof of your thesis.

III. The Closer Look: Paragraph Development

The second stage of the revision process includes refining individual paragraphs and statements. Check to make sure that each:

- A. Paragraph
 1. includes a main idea (topic sentence).
 2. transitions from one point or example to another.
 3. includes specific examples that support the topic sentence/main idea.
 4. incorporates a concluding sentence that summarizes the topic sentence.
- B. Statement
 1. is concise and correct. Delete conversational and informal phrases.
 2. contains varied word choice. Avoid repetition.

Reference Work:

Nadell, Judith, John Langan, and Eliza A. Comodromos. The Longman Writer: Rhetoric and Reader. 6th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006.

For more information on revising your draft:

The New St. Martin's Handbook. St. Martin's Press. 50-69.
The Scribner Handbook for Writers. 2nd ed. Allyn and Bacon. 17-19, 692-694
<http://www.cc.emory.edu/ENGLISH/WC/revessay.html>
<http://www.hamilton.edu/academic/Resource/WC/Revision.html>