

Level Up Your Paper: Revision and Editing

What do you do to revise a paper?

What do professors expect when they ask you to revise?

The Two Parts of Revision

- 1) **Deep Revision**—This is a comprehensive second (or third or fourth) take on your paper. At this stage, don't divide your attention by checking grammar, punctuation, and format. Instead, focus on re-seeing your purpose, your approach to the audience, your main points, your organization, and your style.
- 2) **Editing/Proofreading**—After you've got your paper where you want it to be as far as content goes, you can now carefully read through the document and look for grammatical and stylistic issues.

The Big Picture—Deep Revision

- 1) Start with the big picture—what are you trying to accomplish with this paper? If you could sum up the goal of the paper in a sentence, what would it be? With that purpose in mind, revisit the paper and see if that's actually what comes across.
- 2) After some time away from the paper, give it another read-through. As you read, try to imagine yourself as a five-year-old pest who can't stop asking questions: "Why is that? Says who? What do you mean?" Does your paper answer the questions you raise?
- 3) Get the thoughts of others. Your teacher's comments can be a great place to start. Even better, talk to your teacher in office hours *before* you turn in the paper. You can also have other people read your paper and ask them to tell you the main points you make in the paper along with telling you what they think are its strengths and weaknesses. Is what they are getting from the paper what you were aiming for? You can also bring your paper (and the assignment sheet) to the Writing Center and talk to a writing consultant about various ways to achieve your goals for this paper.
- 4) Read each paragraph of your paper and write out what that paragraph *does* for your paper. If you have trouble deciding what exactly it's doing or if it's doing too many things at once, you may need to revise so the paragraph does a specific job for the main purpose of the paper. Or the paragraph may be need to be broken into separate paragraphs, and you might need to develop more details for each paragraph.

Fine Tuning—Editing & Proofreading

- 1) Read the paper out loud. When you have to say the words out loud, it's easier to detect what doesn't sound right.
- 2) Use a straightedge to read one line at a time; this will force you to read slowly.
- 3) Read the paper backwards (last sentence first); this will allow you to read the sentence out of context, so you focus only on the mechanics.