

Where to Find Help on Campus

Consultants at the **Hamline University Writing Center**, located in the basement of Bush Library, are eager to help you with all stages of your writing. We will work with you whether you have just received an assignment and have no idea how to begin or you have a finished draft and want help with revisions.

You can make appointments online at WC Online. Simply follow the instructions at:

<http://rich37.com/hamline>

We look forward to seeing you!



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Revising an Essay



Revising an Essay

Revising is an important step in writing an essay. You have already put on paper your information, analysis, arguments, and conclusion. Now it is time to go back and see if what you have written is interesting, clear, well developed, and understandable to your intended reader.

Revising, or re-visioning, means to see again, and this is what you will need to do. You will need to see your essay as if it is brand new or written by someone else. To revise, you will need to bring “fresh eyes” to your essay.

You may find it helpful to put aside your essay for a day or two before coming back to revise it.

Questions to Answer in Revision

1. *What is the purpose of my paper?* Often you begin a paper with one purpose, only to find that your research and subsequent writing have altered that purpose. Or perhaps you began your draft with a tight focus on a particular purpose and then veered off in a different direction. Make sure that every paragraph in your paper relates back to your main point or the thesis that was asserted in your introduction.

2. *Who is my audience?* Have you correctly identified your audience, and is your paper designed to appeal to that audience? If you are writing for a professor, he or she may not need much background information. If you are writing for your peers, you may need to offer more complete explanations.

3. *What will attract readers to my essay?* Even if you are only writing for a professor, someone who has to read your work, think about beginning your essay with intriguing, catchy sentences. Reflect on what interests you most about your topic, and why others should be interested in it. Try to capture that enthusiasm in your opening. Make certain your

thesis statement is clear so readers know where your essay is going to take them.

4. *Are my sentences clear?* Could any of your sentences be misinterpreted or present a challenge for readers to understand? Are your quotations properly introduced and related to your thesis? Are technical explanations clear? Reading your paper to a friend or roommate can help you identify areas of potential misunderstanding.

5. *Can I eliminate words, phrases, sentences, or even entire paragraphs to make my writing more concise and compelling?* As you read through your first draft, you may decide that some unnecessary or repetitive words can be cut. Unless your paper is very long, eliminate summaries until the end.

6. *Are my transitions effective?* Your paragraphs should flow logically, one after the other. If you begin a new idea, you need to write a sentence helping readers make the switch with you. You may find it helpful to outline all your paragraphs and then read through this outline to see whether you are presenting your ideas in a logical manner.

7. *Is my thesis supported?* Go through your text and identify all the sentences that support your thesis. Are these sentences clear, or do they need more explanation?

8. *Have I considered counter-arguments?* It is important to consider what your audience might be thinking as they read your paper. Imagine arguments readers might have with your text. Address these arguments directly, briefly stating what they are, and then go on to answer each objection in your text. Consider the following examples.

Some would say that . . . but that doesn't appear to be the case. For example, . . .

It has been the case in the past that . . . but that is not a major concern now.

It used to be true that . . . but ever since . . . , the issue has changed.

This might surprise those who feel . . . but on further consideration, most people would agree that . . .

9. *Am I being honest?* You must make sure you are not writing the paper solely to agree with someone else's viewpoint. In order to be strong, a paper must reflect your own opinions and judgments.

A Revision Checklist

- Can I express the main idea of my paper in one sentence?
- Does my introduction clearly state my purpose?
- Does each paragraph develop a supporting point?
- Have I provided enough examples and details?
- Are my explanations clear?
- Do my sentences and paragraphs follow a logical line of thought?
- Is my conclusion reached logically, as a natural result of my reasoning and arguments?
- What is the overall significance or importance of my paper?

Accessing More Information

- The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>
- The Writing Centers at the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University: www.csbsju.edu/writingcenters

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