REVISING DRAFTS

WHY IS REVISION IMPORTANT?

Revision entails much more than proofreading or editing and should be a large part of your writing process. By revising, you are able to locate problems within your writing that are higher orders of concern than grammar and punctuation. This procedure requires you to look at the work you have done in a critical way to produce the best result. While writers revise, they answer questions like did I say what I meant to, will the reader understand my ideas, and is my point coming across in the most effective way possible.

INITIAL STEPS OF REVISING

- **Wait a day or two.** The easiest, and arguably most important aspect of revision, is making sure that you do not revise on the same day as you write your draft. While drafting, it is crucial to take time in between each session, so you can return to your work with new eyes and a fresh approach to the assignment.

- **Focus on larger concerns.** At this point in your writing process, try to put less focus on grammar and mechanics. During revision, you are mainly looking for logical sequence, clarity, flow, and coherence. By focusing on small mechanics, you can distract yourself from noticing higher order concerns in your writing.

- **Check the prompt.** Make sure that you are examining whether or not you answered the prompt or assignment. Look critically at what you are being asked to do, and how you go about doing that.

- **Take the time to revise your thesis.** Even though you may like what you wrote at first, check it for clarity. Do you still agree with your thesis? After looking back at the prompt, is your thesis too narrow or too broad? Most importantly, outline whether or not your thesis is followed throughout your paper. If there are items in your thesis that are never discussed again, you should revise either the thesis or the body of the paper.

SECONDARY STEPS OF REVISION

- **Are your paragraphs doing what they are supposed to be?** Since you have just revised your thesis, you now need to make sure your body paragraphs are
supporting that thesis. Try to locate the moments in your paragraphs where you directly relate back to the thesis. Hopefully, you have changed your thesis slightly, and so you must revise the body paragraphs to ensure that they are backing up that thesis throughout the paper.

- **Do your body paragraphs have a logical organization?** Similar to revising your thesis and then your body paragraphs, you need to revise to make sure your work has a logical progression. Take the time to make sure paragraphs should not be reordered to make ideas more clear. Sometimes statements made to conclude a paragraph actually sound better introducing the topic. Make sure that if you reference other material in a paragraph that you have explained that topic before so your reader will not only know what you are talking about, but also where to locate it in your paper.

- **Make sure your paper is balanced.** Most of the time, you want to present your information in a balanced way. For example, in a compare and contrast essay, you would revise to check that you have enough comparison and that its comparable in length to your contrasting. Balance is also essential between opinion and fact. If your paper is all fact, you will lack the opportunity to appeal to your human audience. If your paper is filled with opinion, then your credibility will most likely be lost because you have no information to back it up. Lastly, make sure you have balance between your own words, paraphrase, and direct quotation. Too much of any of these can alter the strength of your paper.

- **Introductions and Conclusions.** Introductions and conclusions are obviously intended to introduce a topic and then wrap up the author’s thoughts at the conclusion of a paper. During revision, re-read your introduction and conclusion and see if they are achieving the intended purpose.

**TIPS FOR REVISION**

1. While revising, try reading your paper aloud. This will help you listen for clarity and the overall flow of your writing.
2. Do not try to tackle all the elements of revision at once. Pick one or two aspects to focus on each time you revisit your draft.
3. Revise while using a hardcopy of your paper. Sometimes seeing your writing in a different format can help you have a new outlook on your writing.