



Revising a piece of your own writing is more than just fixing errors—that's **editing**. Revision happens before editing.

Revising involves **re-seeing** your essay from the eyes of a **reader** who can't read your mind, not resting satisfied until you're sure you have been as clear and as thorough as possible.

Revising also requires you to think on a large scale, to extrapolate: If a reader remarked that you didn't have enough evidence in paragraph three, you should also take a close look at paragraphs two and four to be sure that you provide substantial evidence for those claims as well.

An edit might be	A similar Revision might be	Significant Revision might include
Adding a comma before a quote	Explaining one quotation better where a reader didn't understand	Explaining several quotations better, to improve the essay overall
Streamlining your thesis; cutting out unnecessary words	Adding a "because..." statement to your thesis sentence to express your "so, what?" up at the front	Changing every body paragraph so that each uses the same basic argument as the new thesis
Adding "In addition, . . ." to a paragraph to smooth a transition	Changing a paragraph's first-sentence from summary to argument, from "McCloud says..." to "What McCloud says about icons helps show Satrapi's _____."	Changing all first-sentences (and some last-sentences) so that they show your argument; adjusting the rest of each paragraph to reflect your argument
Shortening a long quote & working it into your sentence	Choosing a better quotation that gives a more specific or relevant idea; explaining exactly how that quote (which words?) uses pathos or supports your claim	Adding second-example quotes to several paragraphs; working quotes from Author A into paragraphs with quotes from Author B & drawing connections

Adding a sentence to fill out a paragraph	Splitting a too-long paragraph into two separate ones, each with a new starting & finishing sentence	Adding a whole paragraph or section with a new example, counterargument, or related theory to intensify/expand your analysis
Fixing apostrophe errors in your conclusion paragraph	Revising your conclusion by connecting ideas from 2-3 points or authors at once; tying your conclusion to your introductory images/ideas	Going "out on a limb" in the conclusion to get the "big picture" implications (for whom? why?) then adding some of that info back into ends of body paragraphs

Some Strategies for Revising:

1. **Ask yourself, "What's my best ____ and my weakest ____?"** (sentence, example, paragraph, transition, data, source, etc.) Be honest, and fix that weak spot!
2. **Create a Reverse Outline of your draft.** This is making an outline after your paper has been written, and it will help you to see your draft's structure and logical flow. To do this: First, circle your thesis statement; Then, reading each paragraph one at a time, write down the main point of each paragraph in the margin next to the paragraph. Once you have created your reverse outline, you can look to see if the organization is flowing how you want/need it to? Are your ideas moving logically? If not, rearrange your paragraphs accordingly. Furthermore, now you can see if every paragraph is relating back to your thesis some way. If not, add the necessary information or connections to make sure each paragraph is supporting your argument. If there is a paragraph that doesn't seem to fit within your paper, you may need to develop that paragraph or possibly delete it. Do you see any gaps in logic, perhaps you need to add information (and to do so, you may need to gather said information, perhaps through further research). See the Writing Center handout on Reverse Outlining for further guidance.
3. **Highlighter Approach.** Using a highlighter (or highlighters) on your draft can help you to better visualize where certain information is located in your draft and how that information is working as a whole throughout your writing. To do this, use different colored highlighters to isolate different content elements of your paper. For instance, you could highlight all the evidence in your paper, or for a comparison paper, choose one color to highlight one subject and a different color for a different subject to help you see if you are spending more time on one element over the other. Or, for a paper with multiple sub-points, you might choose different colors to highlight each sub-point to see how they are working together in the draft.
4. **Cut & Rearrange.** Using scissors, cut your paper into individual paragraphs. Each paragraph becomes its own piece of paper. This method allows you to visualize and physically rearrange your draft. You can rearrange the paragraphs to see the best option for organization, development of ideas and argument, where your counterargument best fits, and the flow of your writing.

5. **Develop a Checklist** based on your assignment prompt or the guidelines for your specific piece of writing.

6. **Paragraph-Level Revisions.** To make sure each paragraph is well organized and effective, look at each paragraph individually, examining the following elements: Topic Sentence, Focus, Logic & Progression, Transitions, and Length. Be sure the paragraph has a topic sentence that informs the reader what the paragraph is about/ where the paragraph will go. Make sure the paragraph is staying on “topic” and not meandering into a new topic (and not missing the topic completely). Are your sentences and ideas progressing logically? Make sure you are using appropriate transition words and phrases between sentences, and not just writing statement, statement, statement. If a paragraph is too long or trying to do too much or making too many points, consider splitting it into two to be most accessible for your reader.

7. **Finally, Get a reader’s response!** Have someone else read your writing and give you feedback. Can they easily follow your logic? Where are they confused? Where do you need to make connections for the reader?

Thanks to our friends at GMU Writing Center