

Developing a Final Draft

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will dive deeper into revising, editing, and proofreading strategies as part of developing your final draft. Specifically, this lesson will focus on:

1. Evaluating Organization and Cohesion

As you learned in a previous lesson, a good research paper is both organized and cohesive.

Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer's ideas.

It is important to spend time evaluating both of these aspects during the revision process.

1a. Organization Concerns

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion and that each section reinforces your thesis.

At the essay level:

- Does my introduction proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs flow in a logical order?
- Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- Do I need to add or revise topic sentences to make the ideas clearer?
- Does my conclusion summarize my main ideas and revisit my thesis?

At the paragraph level:

- Does the topic sentence clearly state the main idea?
- Do the details in the paragraph relate to the main idea?
- Do I need to recast any sentences or add transitions to improve the flow?

1b. Cohesion Concerns

When you revise to improve cohesion, you analyze how the parts of your paper work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out-of-place material fits in smoothly.

In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect.

Ask yourself:

1. Does the opening of the paper clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis? Make sure entertaining quotes or anecdotes serve a purpose.
2. Have I included support from research for each main point in the body of my paper?
3. Have I included introductory material before any quotations? Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph.
4. Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
5. Do I need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
6. Are there any places where I have overused material from sources?
7. Does my conclusion make sense based on the rest of the paper? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.

IN CONTEXT

Jorge drafted an essay for his nutrition class. As he reread his draft, he looked to see how the different pieces fit together to prove his thesis. He realized that some of his supporting information needed to be integrated more carefully and decided to omit some details entirely. Read the following paragraph, first without Jorge's revisions and then with them.

One likely reason for these lackluster long-term results is that a low-carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. ~~Most people enjoy foods that are high in carbohydrates, and no one wants to be the person who always turns down that slice of pizza or birthday cake.~~ In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health (2010) noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009). Medical professionals caution that low-carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Clinic, 2008). Registered dietician Dana Kwon (2010) comments, "For some people, [low-carbohydrate] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well" (Kwon, 2010).

Jorge decided that his comment about pizza and birthday cake came across as subjective and was not necessary to make his point, so he deleted it. He also realized that the quotation at the end of the paragraph was awkward and ineffective. How would his readers know who Kwon was or why

her opinion should be taken seriously? Adding an introductory phrase helped Jorge integrate this quotation smoothly and establish the credibility of his source.

2. Evaluating Style and Tone

Once you are certain that the content of your paper fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve style and tone. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers.

Style refers to the way you use language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice.

Although acceptable style and tone will vary slightly within different disciplines, the underlying goal is the same—to come across to your readers as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide.

➔ **EXAMPLE** Consider tour guides at historical sites. A stuffy, overly formal tour guide can make readers feel put off or intimidated. Too much informality or humor can make readers wonder whether the tour guide really knows what they are talking about. Extreme or emotionally charged language comes across as unbalanced.

2a. Style Concerns

A strong research paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious. It is generally best to avoid writing in the first person, as this can make your paper seem overly subjective and opinion-based.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does my paper avoid excessive wordiness?
- Are my sentences varied in length and structure?
- Have I avoided using first-person pronouns, such as "I" and "we"?
- Have I used the active voice whenever possible?
- Have I defined specialized terms that may be unfamiliar to readers?
- Have I used clear, straightforward language whenever possible?
- Do I state my point of view using a balanced tone?

2b. Tone Concerns

An important way that tone is conveyed is through word choice. You will want to review your paper to make sure your language is precise, conveys no unintended connotations, and is free of biases.

Watch out for the following issues:

- Use of vague or imprecise terms
- Use of slang
- Repetition of the same phrases to introduce source material
- Exclusive use of masculine pronouns or awkward use of "he or she"
- Use of language with negative connotations

- Use of outdated or offensive terms to refer to specific ethnic or racial groups

2c. Maintaining Consistency

As you revise your paper, make sure your style and tone are consistent throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence just does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to reread for style and tone after you have completed the other revisions so that you are not distracted by any larger content issues.

Revising strategies you can use include:

1. *Read your paper aloud.* Sometimes your ears catch inconsistencies that your eyes miss.
2. *Share your paper with another reader whom you trust to give you honest feedback.* It is often difficult to evaluate one's own style objectively—especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice instances of wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone.
3. *Line-edit your paper slowly, sentence by sentence.* You may even wish to use a sheet of paper to cover everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing—that forces you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

IN CONTEXT

On reviewing his nutrition paper, Jorge found that he had generally used an appropriately academic style and tone. However, he noticed one glaring exception—his first paragraph. He realized there were places where his overly informal writing could come across as unserious or, worse, disparaging. Revising his word choice and omitting an unnecessary aside helped Jorge maintain a consistent tone. Read his revisions below.

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

*Picture this: You are standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see **an overweight man ~~a chubby guy~~** nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. **(You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.)** Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health, or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?*

3. Evaluating Grammar and Formatting

After revising your paper to address problems in content or style, you will complete one final editorial review. Perhaps you already have caught and corrected minor mistakes during previous revisions. Nevertheless, give your draft a final edit to make sure it is error-free.

Your final edit should focus on two broad areas:

- Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling
- Errors in citing and formatting sources

3a. Grammar Concerns

Given how much work you have put into your research paper, you will want to check for any errors that could distract or confuse your readers.

Using the spell-checking feature in your word-processing program can be helpful—but this should not replace a full, careful review of your document. Be sure to check for any errors that may have come up frequently for you in the past.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my paper free of grammatical errors, such as sentence fragments?
- Is my paper free of errors in punctuation, such as misplaced commas?
- Is my paper free of common usage errors, such as "alot" and "alright?"
- Is my paper free of spelling errors?
- Is my paper free of errors that I know I tend to make frequently?

3b. Formatting Concerns

When editing a research paper, it is also important to check that you have cited sources properly and formatted your document according to the specified guidelines.

There are two reasons for this. First and foremost, citing sources correctly ensures that you have given proper credit to other people for ideas and information that helped you in your work. Second, using correct formatting establishes your paper as one student's contribution to the work developed by and for a larger academic community.

Therefore, when evaluating your formatting, ensure the following:

1. Within the body of your paper, each fact or idea taken from a source is credited to the correct source.
2. Each in-text citation includes the source author's name (or, where applicable, the organization name or source title) and year of publication.
3. Each source cited in the body of your paper has a corresponding entry in the references section of your paper.
4. Your references section includes a heading and double-spaced, alphabetized entries.
5. Each entry in your references section is indented on the second line and all subsequent lines.
6. Each entry in your references section includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format.
7. The margins of your paper are set at one inch, and text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that when developing your final draft, you should spend time **evaluating organization and cohesion**. Some **organization concerns** include the flow of the essay between

paragraphs and the overall construction from the introduction to conclusion. **Cohesion concerns** often involve the integration of source material. You also learned about **evaluating style and tone**. **Style concerns** include wordiness, vague language, and sentence structure, while **tone concerns** often have to do with word choice. It's important to **maintain consistency** in style and tone throughout your essay. Finally, you learned about **evaluating grammar and formatting**. Typical **grammar concerns** involve sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. **Formatting concerns** include the structure and placement of your citations and the size of your font and margins.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This content has been adapted from Lumen Learning's "Read: Developing Your Final Draft" tutorial.