General Areas of Revision

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In this lesson, you will learn about several general areas of your essay that you can address during the revision process. Specifically, this lesson will focus on:

1. General Revision

Just when you think the production of your document is done, the revision process begins. The writing process requires effort, from overcoming writer's block to the intense concentration composing a document often involves.

It is only natural to have a sense of relief when your document is drafted from beginning to end. This relief is false confidence, though. Your document is not complete, and in its current state it could, in fact, do more harm than good. Errors, omissions, and unclear phrases may lurk within your document, waiting to reflect poorly on you when they reach your audience.

Now is not the time to let your guard down, prematurely celebrate, or mentally move on to the next assignment. Think of revision as a process that hardens and strengthens your document.

General revision requires attention to:

- Content
- Organization
- Style
- Readability

These four main categories should give you a template from which to begin to explore details in depth.

1a. Content

Content is one aspect of your document, and it should address the central questions of who, what, where, when, why, and how within the range and parameters of the assignment.

> ↗ EXAMPLE Say you were assigned a report on the sales trends for a specific product in a relatively new market. You could produce a one-page chart comparing last year's results to current figures and call it a day, but would it clearly and concisely deliver content that is useful and correct? Are you supposed to highlight trends? Are you supposed to spotlight factors that contributed to the increase or decrease? Are you supposed to include projections for next year?

The point is that you want to ensure your essay fulfills the assignment's directions.

When revising your content, ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Have I included the content that corresponds to the given assignment?*
2. *Have I left any information out that may be necessary to fulfill the expectations, or have I gone beyond the assignment's directions?*

1b. Organization

Organization is another key aspect of any document. Standard formats that include an introduction, body, and conclusion are likely part of your essay.

When revising your organization, ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Did I decide on a direct or indirect approach?* A direct approach will announce the main point or purpose at the beginning, while an indirect approach will present an introduction before the main point.
2. *Is my organizing principle clear to the reader?* Depending on the needs of the assignment, your document may use any of a wide variety of organizing principles, such the Rogerian or Toulmin argument models.
3. *Does my conclusion mirror my introduction rather than introduce new material?* While conclusions can sometimes benefit from looking to the future of an issue, they are not the place to introduce new evidence.
4. *Did I use effective transitions between paragraphs?* Readers often have difficulty following a document if the writer fails to make one point relevant to the next or to illustrate the relationships between the points.

1c. Style

Style is created through content and organization, but also involves word choice and grammatical structures.

When revising with style in mind, ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Is my essay written in a formal tone, or does it present an awkward mismatch of formal and informal writing?*
2. *Does my essay provide a coherent and unifying voice with a professional tone?*

1d. Readability

Readability refers to the reader's ability to read and comprehend the document. As a writer, your goal is to make your writing clear and concise, not overly complex and challenging.

When revising with readability in mind, ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Is my language appropriate for my audience?*
2. *Do I communicate my ideas in an understandable way while still maintaining a professional tone?*

> 🚩 **HINT**
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> You can often use the "Tools" menu of your word processing program to determine the approximate reading level of your document. The program will evaluate the number of characters per word, add in the number of words per sentence, and come up with a rating. It may also note the percentage of passive sentences and other information that will allow you to evaluate readability. Like any computer-generated

rating, it should serve as one point of evaluation, but not the only point. Your conscious effort to choose words you perceive as appropriate for the audience will serve you better than any computer evaluation of your writing.

	SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that there are four areas of **general revision** that you can focus on when improving your overall essay: **content**, **organization**, **style**, and **readability**. Asking yourself questions specific to these areas during the revision process will help you make your essay the best that it can be.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This content has been adapted from Lumen Learning's "General Revision Points to Consider" tutorial.