

Helpful Revising Strategies

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about five methods of revising that will help you develop the best final draft possible. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Revising Strategies

1a. Time Management

1b. Reading Aloud

1c. Asking Questions

1d. Revising on Paper

1e. Summarizing

1. Revising Strategies

Remember that revising is a process of “re-envisioning” and rethinking a written work. During revision, writers reassess the structure, ideas, and support of their work. There are several ways to revise, all of which involve keeping the “big picture” of the writing project in mind.

Certain strategies work better for some writers than others, but all writers must remain open to new techniques. Revision strategies can be especially helpful to beginning writers, writers working in a new genre, and those who are experiencing writer's block.

As you work through the writing process, you'll learn which of these strategies work best for you. Approach each strategy with an open mind. All of them can help you to improve a draft and overcome writer's block.

1a. Time Management

The first strategy is simple: Give yourself enough time between drafts (or deadlines) to revise. You'll see your work more clearly—the good and the bad—when you're not rushed.

A day or two of revision is ideal, but even a few hours away from your project will enable you to see your work as readers will see it. This is a valuable perspective to have when optimizing your draft.

1b. Reading Aloud

You can also distance yourself from your work by reading it out loud. Writers sometimes overlook mistakes and problem areas when reading silently. It's probably safe to say that everyone is more experienced as a listener than as a reader.

Take advantage of your ears' experience with language to identify words, sentences, and paragraphs that don't flow as well as they could, or should.

1c. Asking Questions

Another effective revision strategy is to ask questions about the draft. For example, it can be helpful to ask, “Do I still agree with my thesis?” It's not uncommon for a writer's opinion to change during the writing process. One of the worst mistakes writers can make is to argue for something that they no longer believe.

You can ask yourself whether you've provided enough support for your thesis. Should you change your thesis to better align it with supporting information, or vice versa? You should also ask questions about the rest of your work, including the broad requirements and purposes of the writing project.

The following are examples of good revision questions:

- *Have I fulfilled the requirements of the assignment on a conceptual level, or only on a technical level (e.g., page length, format and layout, etc.)?*
- *Are the tone, voice, and syntax used in my draft appropriate for the assignment?*
- *How will my audience react to this work, and what can (or should) I do to shape their response?*
- *Have I ignored counterarguments that should be addressed?*

1d. Revising on Paper

Many experienced writers revise their drafts, especially later drafts, using paper copies. Like reading out loud, revising on paper sometimes enables you to view your work from a different perspective, and from a critical distance. You might see the “big picture” better on paper than you did on the screen.

Paper copies can enable you to understand how ideas, proposals, and positions you've included in your draft do (or do not) fit together. It's also easier for most writers to jot down ideas, notes, and comments on a piece of paper than with a word processing application. The use of paper copies enables writers (especially beginning writers) to separate the revision and drafting steps of the writing process.

1e. Summarizing

You can often discover weaknesses in your arguments by rewriting (or verbally stating) the main ideas of your essay. By writing out your ideas, or telling them to another person, you may find a different way to phrase your thesis, for instance. You may also notice small but important things that you would not have detected otherwise.



This strategy is particularly effective when it is combined with the techniques described previously (or any effective technique you may discover on your own.)



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that there are several different **revising strategies** that can be useful when making changes to your draft. These strategies include **giving yourself time** between drafts to revise, **reading your draft aloud**, **asking questions** of your thesis and assignment, **revising on paper**, and **summarizing** your main points and ideas. Each of these strategies can be used independently or in combination with others to effectively revise a draft.

Best of luck in your learning!

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