

# Organization Revision: Cutting, Adding, Moving

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## WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial examines how to revise the organization of written work through the use of three important tools: cutting, adding, and moving. The organization of a sample essay is revised to illustrate the process.

This tutorial considers revision of organization in three parts:

1. Revision and Organization
2. Cutting, Adding and Moving
3. Revision: Example

## 1. Revision and Organization

Revision is the process of re-visioning and rethinking a written work, including its structure, ideas, and support. It is the stage in the writing process when writers take time to assess their work at the "big picture" level. One of the key aspects of a work that is addressed during revision is organization.

The revision stage is a good time for writers to ask questions about their work, including whether or not ideas flow smoothly and logically from one to the next (e.g., whether ideas are presented in a more-complex-to-less-complex order, or vice versa). Writers should also ask whether each idea belongs in the essay, and if additional ideas should be added.

## 2. Cutting, Adding and Moving

Word processing applications enable writers to easily manipulate text (words, sentences and paragraphs) to improve the organization of written work. You can add content (e.g., to provide additional support for a thesis), or remove it when necessary. Any amount of text can be added, deleted or moved, depending on what's needed to improve your draft.

### 3. Revision: Example

Review the following sample essay, then continue reading to understand how it can be improved by cutting, adding, and moving text:

For almost a year, I rode a bicycle in Fresno, an inland California city that combines suburban sprawl with abysmal public transportation services, and tops all of that off with dangerously inconsistent and often nonexistent bicycle lanes. It was a fun year.

A month before I was to leave Fresno to its car-centric existence, I had an experience that pretty much sums up what it now means to me to be carless in a place that all but worships cars. I was a half-block from my girlfriend's house, on the sidewalk with my bike, waiting for the light to change. I was also watching a very tall, scruffy guy working hard to ride what was clearly a small boy's bike, against traffic. I watched him cross three lanes, his knees pumping up to somewhere near his shoulders, then run the light, making a beeline towards my corner.

This kind of thing was not exactly uncommon in Fresno. I'd already gotten used to seeing bicyclists doing really stupid things there, like riding the wrong way down one way streets, riding on the center line of a four-lane road, riding while pulling shopping carts (yes, carts plural), riding while carrying very small children or car tires or all other manner of things I have to imagine would make far better cargo on anything other than a bike. Fresno is the kind of place where a bicycle is a fairly sure sign that you don't have anything else to ride. In a city that spends months near or above triple-digit temperatures and sprawls for miles in every direction despite its relatively small population, bikes are the transport of last resort.

I hadn't realized this until that tall scruffy guy on his too-small bike pedaled awkwardly over to me. The traffic was light but I was still a little apprehensive about this guy, riding a bike that didn't fit him, in a way that suggested he either didn't know much about riding on streets, or he knew what he was doing and didn't care. He rode up to me and stopped, facing the wrong way on the street, and said good morning. I nodded, said something about how it's nice to have the streets to ourselves, in order to foster some kind of bike-riding camaraderie, because that seemed the thing to do.

Then he offered to sell me his bike to \$50. I thanked him but said no, that I already had a bike, and just to be safe I joked that if I had \$50 I wouldn't be biking. He laughed, nodded and said "DUI's suck, bro." Then before I could do more than keep smiling while trying to figure out what he'd said, he rode off down the left side of the road.

It wasn't until I'd arrived at my girlfriend's place that I began to think about what it means that this guy had just assumed I was like him. This was, after all, the first place I'd ever lived where people were surprised I wasn't from there, as opposed to my home, where everyone assumed I was a tourist. Still, it took me a long time to realize that I'd been playing the role he'd been expecting, and that I shouldn't have expected anything more.

The first thing to note about this essay is that the introduction is awkward; it is divided into two paragraphs,

and the first one is very short. Move the first sentence of the second paragraph up a line, and let it be the end of the introduction. This will draw more attention to the scene the writer is setting. Here is the revised introductory paragraph:

For almost a year, I rode a bicycle in Fresno, an inland California city that combines suburban sprawl with abysmal public transportation services, and tops all of that off with dangerously inconsistent and often nonexistent bicycle lanes. It was a fun year. A month before I was to leave Fresno to its car-centric existence, I had an experience that pretty much sums up what it now means to me to be carless in a place that all but worships cars.

The next thing to do is to remove the parenthetical phrase from the third paragraph. It reduces the immediacy of the scene, and the information conveyed by the phrase isn't critical to the essay.

I'd already gotten used to seeing bicyclists doing really stupid things there, like riding the wrong way down one way streets, riding on the center line of a four-lane road, riding while pulling shopping carts (~~yes, carts plural~~), riding while carrying very small children or car tires or all other manner of things I have to imagine would make far better cargo on anything other than a bike.

The fourth paragraph is short, and should provide more detail. Since the writer has not indicated when these events occurred, that information should be added here:

The traffic was light, it being early on a Saturday, but I was still a little apprehensive about this guy, riding a bike that didn't fit him, in a way that suggested he either didn't know much about riding on streets, or he knew what he was doing and didn't care.

The conclusion of the essay is a summary that could be more effective if it indicated that, in the aftermath of this experience, the writer sees little difference between the other rider and himself. In this instance, the best way to improve the essay is to remove the entire paragraph and insert a new one. The flow from the preceding paragraph can be improved by beginning the conclusion with a transition. Here is the revised conclusion:

And the thing is, even though I didn't realize it at the time, there's something amazing about playing a role, when you're aware of it. There's something about seeming to be the person everyone thinks you are, while sitting satisfied in the self-awareness that can only come from an examined life, that allows you to look back at the world and, knowing something it does not, to be free. So I'd like to thank that awkward, DUI-having, little-girl's-bike-riding guy, for helping me learn that lesson, whether or not he knew that's what he was doing.



## SUMMARY

This tutorial demonstrated how to revise the organization of written work by cutting, adding, and moving text. These techniques were applied to a sample essay.

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Source: Adapted from Sophia Instructor Gavin McCall