

Revision Strategies

You just finished writing your paper. Congratulations! But are you really finished? Actually, no. A first draft is simply your first effort at an essay. Essays have to be revised in order to make them finished products.

Read and re-read the assignment instructions

Did you include all the assignment requirements? Did you directly respond to the writing prompt? Make sure to include all the information your professor asks you to include. If you leave something out, your professor will count off for it. Likewise, make sure you understand what the assignment is asking you to do.

Check your thesis statement

Can your reader find the thesis statement? Is your thesis statement clear and understandable? Does your thesis help tie your essay together for your reader? Is the assertion in your thesis the idea you support throughout the essay?

Organize your paper

Note: If your professor has given you an outline for how to organize your paper, use the outline. Make sure you've followed the correct organizational style for your paper. Do you have a clear introduction? Are your body paragraphs in the best order? Does your conclusion match up with what you have written in the body?

Organize your paragraphs

Look at your organization. Does each paragraph have a topic sentence that correctly introduces the paragraph, ties the content of the paragraph to the thesis, and makes the support for the thesis clear? A topic sentence helps your reader understand the logic and organization of your essay. Does your paragraph include only one idea? Would your paragraph be clearer broken up into subtopics? Would it be better combined with another paragraph?

Follow the rubric

If your professor provides a rubric showing you how he or she is going to grade your paper, use it! Make sure you have satisfied all the criteria in the rubric. If you don't understand an element of the rubric, ask your professor what it means. Make sure you understand each element of the rubric.

Be specific

Look at the support you have included in your paper. Is it specific enough? Does it actually support **your** essay? Do not be afraid to include details in your paper. If you are identifying a general idea, provide support showing specific people who have experience with that idea. Do not engage in hypotheticals. Include specific incidents that have actually occurred. Take advantage of both statistical information and anecdotal evidence.

Organization Idea: Outline your paper

Make sure your organization makes sense by creating an outline of what you have written. For each paragraph, write a sentence (perhaps the topic sentence from your essay) or phrase that tells what each paragraph is about. Then, under it, jot down all the details, examples, and evidence that is included in that paragraph. Is each element necessary? Is each element effective? Look from one paragraph to the next of your outline to see if the flow of ideas makes sense.

Be clear

Make sure that all your ideas are clear and that you show the logical relationship between ideas. While **you** know what you're trying to say in an essay, **your reader** might have a harder time understanding. All your reader has is what you put on the page. Also, don't abruptly change terminology in your paper, and don't assume the reader understands how two ideas are connected.

Contextualize your quotes

When you include quotations as evidence, be sure to introduce them. You will often need to provide context for the quote. Make it clear to the reader the topic and occasion for the work you are quoting. After the quotation, you should tie it back to **your** essay. These elements change on an individual basis, so make sure to consider what your reader will need!

Check your wording and flow

Read your paper aloud, to yourself or someone else (like a writing center tutor!). This helps you catch a variety of errors and awkward phrasing. To check just for wording issues, try reading your essay backwards, taking one sentence at a time. This helps you focus on each word and sentence and not on the paragraph as a whole.

Edit your paper

Save editing for last. Tackle the big issues before you even begin to worry about editing issues. In addition, spell check and grammar check are not flawless, so use your judgment when taking suggestions from any automated check.

