

The **WRITING** CENTER

**Elftmann Student
Success Center**

A Guide On How To:

Revise Your Writing

- What is revising?
- What strategies can I use?
- When am I done?



Revising Your Writing

Once you have a draft, breathe and step back for a moment. Drafting is a big step in the process, but revision is what takes average writing to excellent.

What do I do during revision?

The purpose of revision is to **decide how clear your argument was made**, not to look for errors (that's later on). Revision is your chance to find something that maybe didn't come to you the first time around. Go back to the original assignment description, and **sincerely** decide how well you've written to the assignment.

You can also rearrange your thoughts, find better wording, or cut things that don't work anymore. This is better known as editing. However, editing won't help much if you haven't thought through – or revised – your ideas.

What is unity?

To revise for unity means to evaluate **how related each supporting sentence is to your topic**. A strong piece of writing will clearly do this, as readers will concentrate on your support to follow your main point and make their own conclusions.

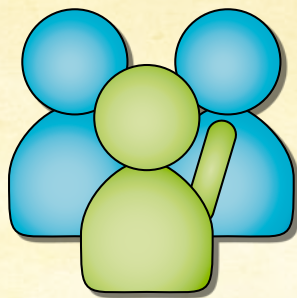
A **Reverse Sentence Outline** is a revision strategy that can help you revise for unity. Reformat your writing into an outline; the topic sentence of each paragraph should sit at the Roman numeral, and each supporting sentence at the capital letter indented underneath. Then, compare each supporting sentence to your topic sentence, and each topic sentence to your central point. Ask yourself if the support actually relates to the topic, and how well it does this.

I. Topic Sentence

- A. Supporting Sentence #1
- B. Supporting Sentence #2
- C. Supporting Sentence #3
- D. Closing Sentence

What is style?

A writer's style comes from the **language** he/she uses. The word choices you make, like whether to call something "historic," "antiquated," or "old," creates an image for your readers to see and a voice for them to hear.



Revising for style is best when done with a **Peer Review**, in which you ask a classmate to read your draft and give you feedback. Different words create specific images, but they still vary from reader to reader, and Peer Review will give you another perspective. In addition, a Peer Review allows you to hear how effective your word choices are.

What is coherence?

Coherent writing includes wording that helps its reader see the **relationships between ideas**. Words like "first," "another," "similarly," and "for this reason" describe a certain relationship between the idea before it and after it. Giving your readers these signposts helps them organize the information as they read.

To check for coherence, trying reformatting your writing into a **graphic organizer** such as a word web, table, or timeline. Find the main idea of each of your sentences for shorter writing, or paragraphs for longer pieces, and decide what kind of graphic organizer would be best to show how these ideas are related. Then, reread your central point or topic sentence and determine what relationship is being introduced by that statement. Do they match?

What is support?

Support for your central idea can include steps, examples, characteristics, differences, or consequences. The essence of any message is its support; readers will use the **details** you offer to either follow or discredit your message.

The two most important aspects of your support to revise for are its size and strength. To see if you have enough support that is strong and convincing, create a **Reverse Word Outline**. Narrow each sentence down to one or two words that convey the main idea and organize it into an outline. Use the Roman numerals for the main ideas of your topic sentences, and the capital letters underneath for the main ideas of your supporting sentences. Then, compare each supporting main idea to your topic sentence main idea, and look for at least three supporting main ideas per paragraph.

When am I done revising?

Writing is a process, so effective writers are constantly moving through the cycle, including revising their work. Just as an athlete is never done training, a writer is never done revising.

This also means that you are able to **revise as you write**. Just beware of missing or ignoring the big picture your writing, or spending too much time on Point A and forgetting what you wanted to say about Point B before you get a chance to type it.

How can I revise my own writing when I don't feel that my writing skills are strong?

As a technical student, you need strong analytical and evaluation skills. Examining pieces of a machine or drawing, forming an idea about them, and putting forth your ideas are essential skills in most technical fields. In other words, you're **already practicing the skills needed to revise a piece of writing**.

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