

## Revising—Re-envisioning—Re-seeing

Think of your writing as though it were wet clay waiting to be reshaped. A first draft is not a final draft since in a first draft your clear ideas are not yet fully formed. Once you have finished writing you should put your draft aside for a minimum of a few hours and ideally for a few days. This will allow time for you to develop a fresh vision for your writing so that you can try to look at your paper from the point of view of your reader. Your papers will be graded based on **content**, **organization** and **style**. Accordingly you'll want to read your draft three times.

**First Reading :** Global view: look at **content** and think of overall meaning.

- Do you have an overall obvious plan?
- Is your thesis clear and convincing?
- Have you backed up your thesis with appropriate evidence to show what you mean and have you done this in a convincing way?
- Will your readers be left with unanswered questions? If yes, think about what facts you may have left out that need to be added.
- Will your reader be able to understand the content?
- Are your ideas easy to follow?
- Does your writing make sense?
- Does your writing allow for connections to be made in the reader's mind?
- Are you satisfied?
- Have you accomplished what you set out to do?
- Have you fulfilled the requirements of the assignment?

**Second Reading:** Editing: is your paper well **organized**?

- Is each section of your paper fully fleshed out and do all sections relate to the introduction and conclusion?
- Do the introduction and conclusion focus clearly on your main point?
- Look at the paragraphing. Quickly write a two to three word summary beside each paragraph to help you obtain an overview of the structure of your paper.
- Is each paragraph well developed? Is it focused? Does it stray too far from the central idea of the paragraph? Read the first sentence and the last sentence of each paragraph to determine if the paragraph is unified.
- Are there smooth transitions between paragraphs? Read the last sentence of a paragraph and the first sentence of the next paragraph. If there is no obvious connection between paragraphs you may need to create a transition.
- Are the paragraphs too long or too short?
- Does the conclusion finish the essay in a fresh and interesting way or does your essay stop abruptly? Or are you simply restating what you said earlier?
- Do the introduction and conclusion focus clearly on your main point?

**Third Reading:** Proofreading: Think about the overall **style** of your writing.

- Proofreading is not just spell checking. Spell checking will not pick up word usage problems such as the difference between *their* and *there*.
- Are the words you have chosen the best words and are they appropriate for your audience and purpose?
- Is your writing too formal or informal?
- Are your sentences complete in terms of grammar?
- Is the meaning of each sentence clear? If you know a sentence is not working, rewrite it from scratch and then refer back to your original sentence. Sometimes the only way out of a sentence rut is by creating a fresh sentence.
- Are your sentences varied in length, type and opening words?
- Are your verb tenses consistent?
- Is your pronoun usage consistent?
- Have you correctly documented your sources using MLA or APA?
- Does your paper look sloppy? Unfortunately first impressions do matter. Make the paper visually attractive according to your course guidelines.
- Do you have a title that captures the essence of your essay?
- Are there ways in which you can add finesse to your language in a manner that rings true to your field of study?
- Ensure your paper is as near perfect as possible. Don't risk losing the strength of your ideas because of carelessness in proofreading.

**Personal Progress**

- When a professor returns your paper read the comments carefully. If you don't understand a comment ask for clarification.
- Compile a list of the mistakes you make most frequently and refer to this list when writing the final draft for your next assignment.
- Correct your mistakes by consulting a writing guide such as *The Canadian Writer's Reference Guide* by Diana Hacker, or book an appointment for a tutorial at the Mount Saint Vincent University Writing Resource Centre (457-6567).

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