

# Revision Strategies

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As you've probably already discovered as a writer, drafting a paper isn't always enough: you probably have to do some revision to get the paper looking and sounding...well, good! The following strategies will help you move from a first draft to a more polished version.

## Write a Post-Draft Outline

Even if you think outlines aren't useful as a planning tool before you begin writing a paper, try outlining after you've got a draft written. You might be surprised at what you discover!

After outlining the content of your paper, analyze it: Did you dedicate too much time to one topic? Did you write too little about other ideas? Does the order of ideas make good sense? Does it appear that your paper leaves out some important ideas—or gets off track?

After analyzing your outline, move things around a bit. Add to the outline, and cut irrelevant information from it. By the time you finish, you should have a good roadmap to follow as you revise our work.

## Think BIG

Re-read your paper, focusing mainly on “global” writing issues: the organization of the paper, whether each idea is detailed enough, and whether the information in the paper is accurate and what you really mean to say. Write comments to yourself in the margins, noting where you need to write more or where you might need to insert a brand new idea. Cross out ideas that don't belong. Draw arrows to indicate how paragraphs/sentences might be reordered. Only after you've attended to these larger issues of content, organization, and development, should you focus on grammar and punctuation.

## Try WIRMI: “What I really mean is...”

You might find, in reading through your essays, that particularly difficult ideas didn't come out sounding so clear. This is a common problem writers run into. It's difficult to state clearly ideas for your reader that you're still trying to understand yourself! If you locate passages that are confusing or don't say exactly what you mean, find a classmate or writing consultant and talk through those ideas. Ask your friend or the writing consultant to write down whatever you say. You might find that you're able to articulate your points better by talking through them!

Can't get to a friend or writing consultant in time to finish your paper? Try talking to yourself. Read aloud the awkward or unclear passage, and then put down the paper and—without looking at it—say “What I really mean is...” and finish the thought. Try to just say what you mean without worrying about how it sounds. Oftentimes this can clarify seemingly complex points in your mind and allow you to write about them more effectively.

## Don't Be Afraid to Cut

If you don't know exactly what to say, you may be tempted to use flowery words or bring up tangential points. Don't be afraid to cut anything that doesn't support your main ideas.

## Use Color

Grab some colored pens or highlighters (or use the highlighting function in your word processing program). Read through your paper and assign each major idea a color. Are the same colors appearing together—or spread out? Try reorganizing your paper to get information grouped by color.

## Break Out the Scissors and Glue!

If you are more of a visual or kinesthetic learner, trying literally cutting apart the paragraphs of your paper and pasting them to a piece of poster board in the order that makes the most sense. (You might even ask a friend or writing consultant to help you figure out how the pieces fit together best.)



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