

Revision Checklist

You should always be looking for ways to improve your paper. Ask the following questions as you revise:

CONTENT & INTRODUCTION

- Is your title interesting?
- Is your main idea narrowed enough to be covered in depth?
- Are your opening lines appealing enough to hook the reader?
- Will your reader learn something new from your paper?

ORGANIZATION

- Have you organized your paper in a sensible, logical, or creative way to suit your purpose?
- Do you have enough support for your main idea?
- Does all the information relate to your main idea? Have you eliminated unneeded, irrelevant information?
- Are effective transitions used to connect your details and examples to help your reader follow your points easily?
- Does the conclusion provide a satisfying sense of closure? Does it provide the proper emphasis?

STYLE

- Are precise words used instead of vague ones?
- Is concrete (sensory) language used when appropriate?
- Would similes and metaphors make an explanation clearer or a detail more vivid?
- Are a variety of sentence structures and length used?
- Have you checked for unnecessary repetition (especially linking verbs and pronouns)? Have you cleared out the clutter?

MECHANICS

- Have you checked end punctuation (. ? !)?
- Do you have reasons for using the commas you have inserted?
- Have you checked for semi-colons or commas with conjunctions between related sentences?
- Have you used dashes, colons, and quotation marks correctly?
- Have you checked spelling and word usage, especially sound-alikes, verb tenses, and pronouns?

OVERVIEW

- Are you satisfied with your paper? Have you created the impression you wanted to make for the reader?

REVISION: THE KEY TO GOOD WRITING

All good writers revise. They read over what they have written looking for ways to improve by combining sentences, removing or adding words, changing words, and rearranging sentences or paragraphs. To revise means "to look at again, to see again...to correct or improve." When you revise, you are trying to make your writing as clear, smooth, and interesting as you can. This can mean shortening, lengthening, changing or substituting, rearranging. Look at and think about the following examples:

Original: I am thinking about my home town. I left my home town five years ago.

Revision: I am thinking about my home town, which I left five years ago.

Original: People who are reasonable sometimes have ideas that don't work.

Revision: Reasonable people sometimes have ideas that don't work.

Original: The cat that has brown and white stripes jumped into my lap which was empty.

Revision: The brown and white striped cat jumped into my empty lap.

Original: The city has many problems. One problem is bad transportation. It's terrible. Another problem is sanitation...

Revision 1: The city has many problems. One problem is the subways. The trains are dirty and unpleasant. The floors are filthy. Another problem is sanitation...

Revision 2: The city has many problems. One problem is the subways, which are dirty and unpleasant. Yesterday, on the Flushing local, cigarette butts and crumpled pages of The Daily News lay everywhere. Streaks of black and yellow paint covered the windows. On the only empty seat in the car sat a paper bag wet from cola that dripped to a brown puddle on the floor. Candy and gum wrappers were scattered under the seats, too. I almost felt as if I were riding in a garbage can.

Here are two paragraphs about similar subjects--fathers. Which paragraph is more in need of revision? Why?

My father's face is rough, leathery and wrinkled. Large pores in the skin cover his nose and cheeks. His nose, broken twice in his life, makes him look like a boxer who has lost too many fights. His mouth, unless he smiles, looks hard and threatening. Dad's chin is massive and angular. Shaved or not, my father's face is rugged.

I want to talk about my father. He is strict with his children, especially me. He won't let me out of the house unless I've done all my homework. He is a tall and rather skinny man. Some people say he is goodlooking. He has a nice streak of gray in his hair. He laughs a lot and enjoys life. My father is interesting.