

Revision & Editing Checklist

Revision and editing are essential steps for clear and concise writing. It is recommended that you review your writing in two distinct stages: First, revision is devoted to content, meaning, and structure—the “big picture.” Second, editing is concerned with word choice, grammar, punctuation, citations, and other stylistic features. In order to edit your writing effectively, you need to learn basic rules of grammar, punctuation, and a preferred citation style. Refer to a citation style guide and a writer’s handbook with clear explanations and practical examples, such as *The Little, Brown Handbook*. The ASC provides a number of handouts that can help you during various stages of the writing process. Remember, revision and editing takes time, and clear and concise writing demands multiple drafts.

Revision

1. Purpose

- Does the essay conform to the assignment?
- Is the thesis clearly defined?
- Who is your audience?

2. Structure/Organization

- Does the introduction supply suitable background information?
- Does each paragraph have a topic sentence that states the main idea?
- Does each paragraph have a concluding sentence transitioning to the next paragraph?
- Is there a concluding paragraph that summarizes the main points of the paper?

3. Development

- Are the paragraphs well-arranged?
- Are there enough details, examples, and evidence to support each main point?
- Does each sentence and paragraph support the thesis?

4. Unity/Coherence/Flow

- Does the paper “flow” smoothly?
- Are transitional words and phrases used between sentences, and can any transitions be improved?
- Have you incorporated appropriate quotations effectively?
- Do the sentences vary in length?
- Does the introduction engage the reader?
- Does the conclusion answer the question “So what”?
- Is the title appropriate and adequately informative?

Editing

1. Grammar

- Sentence fragments: Does each sentence have a subject, a verb, and a complete thought?
- Subject-verb agreement: Are singular verbs used with singular subjects and plural verbs used with plural subjects?
- Tense: Is each sentence in the appropriate tense?
- Active and passive voice: Use active voice whenever possible (the subject performs the verb's action).

2. Punctuation

- Are commas used correctly?
- Are hyphens placed between compound adjectives (e.g. nine-page document)?
- Are semicolons used correctly to connect independent clauses?
- Are all periods and commas inside quotation marks and semicolons and colons placed outside them?
- Have apostrophes been used correctly to indicate possession?

3. Spelling

- Have all contractions (e.g. don't) been removed?
- Have you checked for any spelling errors that your spell-checker would not recognize (including homophones, e.g. to, too, two)?

4. Style

- Has wordiness (unnecessary/redundant words) been eliminated?
- Is your diction/tone suitable for the intended audience?
- Have you avoided ambiguous references such as "this," "these," "it," "they," etc.?
- Are the pronouns gender neutral?

5. Documentation & Formatting

- Have you followed established conventions (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago, CSE, etc.) including those specified by your instructor?
- Are direct quotations duplicated accurately?
- Have you acknowledged all sources and ideas that are not your own to avoid plagiarism?

Helpful Tips

- Carefully reading your paper aloud helps considerably. By beginning at the end of the document you are better able to focus on one sentence at a time.
- Take a break between drafts to create some distance between you and your writing; a day or so is ideal, at minimum an hour or two.
- Swap papers with a friend and practice peer editing.
- Many people find it easier to edit from a hard copy rather than on a computer screen.
- Learning from your instructor's feedback is an effective way to improve your writing.
- Meet with a writing tutor for feedback at any stage of the writing process.