REVISION CHECKLIST

Problem

Many writers are reluctant to revise and reorganize their writing because they’ve already put so much time into the first draft, or because they don’t think they can—or should—improve on what they’ve already written. Revision means *much* more than proofreading for mechanical errors. Revision is important and substantial work that can require making significant choices in order to clarify and strengthen your writing and ideas. Additionally, while it may seem easiest simply to review the paper yourself, it can often be difficult to distance yourself from your own writing. Having someone else read and critique your work is crucial to getting a true outsider’s point of view and can alert you to previously unnoticed questions and problems.

Solutions

The following is a list of concerns that should be considered when you are revising a paper:

**DOES THE PAPER FULFILL THE ASSIGNMENT AND INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS?**

Before you put any more time and effort into your draft, it is important to make sure that what you are writing fits with your instructor’s expectations. Look back at your assignment or consult with your instructor to confirm that you’re on the right track; it can be very frustrating to complete a second or third draft and then find out that you need to start over. If appropriate, you should also reread the instructor’s comments on previous papers to ensure that your revision is meeting your instructor’s expectations.

**IS THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF YOUR PAPER CLEAR AND LOGICAL?**

Don’t be afraid to reorganize the order of your ideas after you’ve written an initial draft, or even to modify your thesis in light of how what you’ve written has developed. Because your ideas may change and deepen as you write, and because new ideas may emerge, you may need to reconsider which points deserve more attention and how these points now relate to each other. Read your paper as carefully and critically as you would any other author’s. Overall, check that you present a clear and effective introduction, an accurate thesis statement, a sequence of main ideas that directly supports that thesis, and a conclusion.

**DO YOU SUPPORT YOUR IDEAS OR ARGUMENTS WITH SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE?**

Keeping your audience, genre, and discipline in mind, make sure that evidence and other support is provided where appropriate. Look for ideas that are not supported or fully developed or explained. Adequate support is central to a credible claim, and credible sources are likewise central to providing solid support and development for your ideas. This may require that you revisit or reconsider your notes and researched sources, or that you conduct additional research to lend more support to important but underdeveloped ideas.

**IS EACH PARAGRAPH WELL STRUCTURED?**

Each paragraph should have one main idea, expressed clearly. Make sure not to overload your paragraphs with two or three main ideas. In addition—and especially if you’ve reorganized your ideas—check that appropriate transitions between paragraphs
are present, and that ideas are not presented more than once without an express purpose.

ARE YOUR SENTENCES CLEARLY WRITTEN AND APPROPRIATE TO THE DISCIPLINE OR GENRE?
Check to see if your main idea is presented clearly at the front of each sentence. Work to eliminate any unnecessary words, and to make sure that your language is formal enough for an academic paper (avoid unclear statements, and make deliberate choices about your use of slang and conversational language). Finally, make sure that you have defined (directly or by illustration or discussion) any new or technical terminology for your reader.

IS YOUR PROSE GRACEFUL AND COMPELLING?
Consider the interest of the reader and how you’re working to maintain it: Do you vary your word choice and sentence length? Do you write in the appropriate voice (active or passive) for your discipline and purpose? Is your language concise? Is your tone persuasive and convincing?

ARE YOUR SOURCES (IF ANY) ALL APPROPRIATELY INTEGRATED AND CITED?
Check that your sources are used and integrated into your writing correctly and appropriately. Consult a style guide to complete your citations and Works Cited or References pages correctly, making sure all sources are appropriately noted and accounted for. (See the appropriate quicktip for your discipline’s documentation style.)

IS YOUR WRITING ERROR-FREE?
Finally, be sure to edit and proofread for any errors in grammar and punctuation. Also, consult a style guide to make sure that your citations and Works Cited or References pages are completed correctly. (For more information, consult the Center for Writing’s quicktip on Editing and Proofreading Strategies.)

Adapted from The University of Minnesota’s Student Writing Guide (2004, pp. 9–11), and from The College of Education and Human Development Writing Center’s handout, “Editing and Proofreading Strategies.”