

GOING OVER YOUR PAPER: SELF-EDITING STRATEGIES

Use one or more of the strategies below to assist you in editing your own writing. Focus on “global” or “higher order” writing issues (i.e., organization, thesis statement, conclusion) during your first draft, and paragraph and sentence revision during your final drafting stages.

Tips Consider the following recommendations before you begin revising and editing.

1. Be an active, objective reader of your own writing; allow time between writing and reading.

Read your writing just as you would a reading assignment for a class. Allow time—an hour, a day, or more—between your role as “writer” and “reader” to help you detach from your writing.

2. Collect resources to help you self-edit.

Before you begin reading, gather your assignment sheet, course texts, a dictionary and thesaurus. In addition supplies like different colored highlighters and pens help you read more actively.

3. Work on a hard copy, not on your computer.

In the Writing Center we require that students work with tutors on paper copies of their drafts, rather than at a computer. This allows the writer to focus on the revision process, read more objectively, and make notes in the margins about sentence-level and global revisions.

4. Meet with a tutor or your instructor—more than once!

Students can meet with Writing Center tutors up to two times a week. Additionally, students may access a classroom tutor in the Gateway Center, meet with departmental subject tutors at several locations around campus, and visit their instructors’ office hours while drafting and revising.

Global Revision Strategies for revising the structure of your paper (*early draft stage*)

- Re-read the assignment sheet.** Underline the verbs (*define, review, summarize*) and circle the nouns (*journal entry, narrative essay, critique*) in your assignment sheet to see what you are to *do* and what *form* the writing is to take. What is the assignment asking you to demonstrate?
- Underline your thesis.** Your thesis should answer the main question that the assignment asks. Re-read your assignment and your thesis. Do you need to clarify or revise your thesis?
- Re-read your conclusion.** Sometimes the thesis or purpose of a paper can change during the writing process. Does your thesis match the conclusion you offer at the end of your paper?

Paragraph Revision Strategies for revising paragraphs (*middle draft stage*)

TOPIC SENTENCES: Often the first sentence of a body paragraph summarizes its main idea.

- Underline your topic sentences.** Do they refer back to the claim you made in your thesis? If no, try using keywords to connect the ideas in the paragraph back to your thesis. For example:

Thesis:	SBCC is the best community college in California because of the quality of the instructors , the variety of degree programs, and the beautiful view .
TS 1:	SBCC has high quality instructors .
TS 2:	SBCC offers a wide variety of degree and certificate programs from which students may choose.
TS 3:	SBCC campus has a beautiful view .

The terms in bold repeat and signal how the body paragraph relates to the thesis. Key terms are often repeated in the conclusion. It is common for these key words or phrases to change as your ideas develop through the writing process. If you

find that important terms have changed by the end of your paper, you may need to review and revise your thesis to match the main ideas your paper explores.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS: Review quotations, paraphrasing, or statistics that support your thesis.

- Highlight the “evidence” in your body paragraphs in one color.** The proof you use to support the claims in each body paragraph can be from your own experience, material from class lectures or course readings, or information you found in research. Check your assignment sheet to see what type of evidence is appropriate for your paper.
- Highlight your analysis of the evidence** in a different color than you used above. Keep in mind that most academic writing requires a minimum of 2-3 lines of your own analysis for every line of supporting evidence that you use.
- Check your analysis.** If you are not sure you have sufficient or appropriate analysis, ask yourself: Have I rephrased the evidence in my own words to summarize and clarify it for the reader? Have I explicitly explained how this piece of evidence best proves my claim?

TRANSITIONS: Use phrases that lead the reader from the idea in one paragraph to the idea in the next.

- Underline your transitions.** Transitions can be words, phrases, or sentences. If you are not sure you have effective transitions that act as bridges from one paragraph to the next, read the end of one body paragraph, then the beginning of the next. Does your transition connect the two ideas?


Sentence Revision

Strategies for revising the sentences in your paper (*final draft stage*)

- Read aloud; read slowly.** Many errors are easier to find if you read your writing aloud. Leave enough time before the paper is due to read carefully and correct the errors that you find.
- Have a friend, classmate, or tutor read your paper aloud to you.** An objective reader can help you identify errors that you have not found, as well as ask questions to help you clarify and strengthen your ideas.
- Read the sentences in reverse order, from end to beginning.** Starting with the last sentence of your conclusion, read your paper from the end to the beginning. Reading each sentence in isolation from the sentences around it allows you to catch errors that you may miss when thinking about the content and ideas as you read the sentences in a “normal” sequence.
- Keep a record of common errors that you make.** As you self-edit, track your most frequent errors. Learning to identify and correct frequent errors enables you to make changes independently, and minimize those error types in future writing.

Several common errors to check for are:

- Articles and Determiners
- Subject/Verb Agreement
- Appropriate, consistent use of voice (i.e., “you”, “one”, “I”)
- Sentence Structure
- Diverse, clear vocabulary
- Verb Form
- Word Form
- Verb Tense

 For more information about self-editing your paper, explore these additional resources, available in the Writing Center or on our website at: www.sbccc.edu/learningresources .

- **Understanding the Assignment**
- **Checking the Structure of Your Essay**
- **Correct Comma Use**
- **Structure of a General Expository Essay**
- **Building Complex Sentences**