

Lecture 6: Revising, editing and proofreading

Academic literacy necessitates a careful attention to style and layout of the written text due to the immense impression they have on the overall appreciation of the audience. Correct spelling, accurate grammar and punctuation are some key aspects of academic literacy that are highly recommended in students' dissertation writings. In order to guarantee this correctness and accuracy, students must frequently revise, edit and proofread their drafts for any blemishes that may deform the perfection of the final written production

1. Revising

As Smith (2003: 14) expresses it, "most writers revise as they write. That's why pencils with erasers were invented". This means that almost all writers, whether with pens on papers or keyboard on laptops, go over their drafts for any refinement in the organization and style. Revising is a large-scale checking over of the text in terms of purpose, focus, organization of content and paragraphing. To revise *your* final draft, consider global aspects of your text as the clarity of arguments, coherence of paragraphs, unity of ideas, consistency of purpose and appropriateness of style to content. When revising, the following questions need to be considered.

- Is the target audience well identified (their knowledge of the subject, level of interest in the subject, and their attitudes toward the subject)?
- Is the purpose of the text well accomplished i.e. to inform readers, persuade them, entertain them, or call them to action?
- Is the voice of the text appropriate to its audience and purpose? Or is the tone too formal/ informal?
- Are the arguments clear enough to be understood by the audience?
- Is the evidence well-supported and accurate for each of my claims?
- Are the arguments fairly developed in each section, chapter, or paragraph?
- Is the purpose of each paragraph clear and understood?

- Are the paragraphs coherent and cohesive? Are they too long or too short?
- Does the introduction prepare the readers for the development of the text?
- Is the emphasis appropriately given to the main parts of the arguments?
- Do the transitions help readers move from one paragraph to the next?
- Does the conclusion sum up the arguments and leave the readers with the sense of closure?

Example 1

One way to revise an academic text is to make sure that it includes a well-organized and effective introduction, body, and conclusion. Revise this passage, which is based on an encyclopedia article, by answering the questions that follow.

(1) Despite what people often say, no connection has been found between brain size and intelligence. (2) The brilliant physicist, Einstein, had it seems, an average or undersized brain. (3) Studies show; that only one parts of the brain are involved in the kind of thinking we usually call intelligence. (4) These are the outer skin or cortex, of the forebrain or cerebrum. (5) This cerebral cortex is a thick layer of tissue with much folds! (6) The depth and number of these folds seem to have something to do with how intelligent one is, whether one be human or animal, with deeper and more numerous folds meaning one is more intelligent. (7) It's true that humans have the biggest brain-to-body ratio of all animals. (8) This measure, however, doesn't seem to account for differences in intelligence among humans. (9) Interesting enough, the cerebral-cortex of a dolphin is just as deep and convoluted like humans.

1. Revise Sentence 1 to create a livelier introduction. should Sentences 7 and 8 be moved?
2. Rewrite Sentence 6 to make it clearer and to, remove the pronoun *one*.
3. Write a question to follow Sentence 9 in which you compare dolphins and humans.

Example 2

To revise a literary analysis, make sure that it clearly identifies the work under examination and presents a unified interpretation based on specific evidence. Revise this passage, which is based on a critical examination of Mary Shelley's nineteenth-century novel *Frankenstein*. Begin by answering the questions that follow. Then, use

proofreading marks to correct errors in grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

(1) Shelley created one of the most enduring monsters in literature—Frankenstein’s entire monster. (2) Her classic novel tells the story of a scientist who built a enormous man out of body parts. And brings it to life, only to loose control of it. (3) The monster goes on a rampage, untill, caught on an ice-berg. it floated out to sea. (4) Frankenstein is a horrifying story, but not just a horror story. (5) It's a powerful story that has a message about how a great discovery in science is used by a person who is himself a scientist but uses his discovery without thinking about all of its possible consequences.

(6) Shelley's "Dr. Frankenstein" is a typical 19th-Century scientist, drunk with the power, he thinks science can give him not over men but over nature. (7) The movies have brought this character back dozens of times. (8) Is science really giving us power over nature, or is it creating monsters that will destroy us? (9) In an age of nuclear bombs, this question is important!

1. Revise Sentence 1 to let readers know specifically what work will be examined.
2. Rewrite Sentence 5 to shorten it and clarify the main idea.
3. Which sentence should be deleted, since it bears no relevance to this interpretation?
4. Rewrite Sentence 9 to create a transition from the preceding sentence.

2. Editing

Smith (2003) compares an unedited draft to badly served steak in a restaurant that consisted of half fat, bone, and gristle. Editing means checking the draft at the sentence level to correct spelling and mechanical errors, besides checking word choice and format (Kienzler 2008). Unlike revising which checks the draft in its large-scale, editing makes surface-level changes that ensures the correctness of the text. It should always accompany revision to fix the following aspects:

- Sentence structure
- Subject–verb and noun–pronoun agreement
- Punctuation
- Word choice and usage
- Spelling

This checklist helps for better editing.

- Are the sentences easy to read?
- Are fragments and run-ons repaired?
- Are wordy and awkward sentences eliminated?
- Are the punctuation marks properly used?
- Are the subjects in agreement with verbs?
- Are the tense and voice suitable?
- Are the modifiers well-placed?
- Are the sentences grammatically appropriate? Does each sentence make sense on its own?
- Are the references appropriately quoted according to the referencing conventions?

Example (Hacker 2009)

~~Although some cities have found creative ways to improve access to public transportation for physically handicapped passengers, and to fund other programs, there have been problems in our city has struggled with due to the need to address budget constraints and competing needs priorities. This The budget crunch has led citizens to question how funds are distributed.² For example, last year when city officials voted to use available funds to support had to choose between allocating funds for accessible transportation or allocating funds to after-school programs rather than transportation upgrades, they voted for the after-school programs. It is not clear to some citizens why these after-school programs are more important.~~

The edited version is as follows.

Some cities have funded improved access to public transportation for physically handicapped passengers. Because of budget constraints, our city chose to fund after-school programs rather than transportation programs. As a result, citizens have begun to question how funds are distributed and why certain programs are more important than others.

3. Proofreading

After revising and editing, proofreading is the last phase in preparing the manuscript. It is the final checking up for minor errors in spelling, punctuation marks positions word repetition. As Hacker (2009: 30) writes, “Proofreading is a special kind of reading: a slow and methodical search for misspellings, typographical mistakes, and omitted words or word endings”. Compare: *Woman, without her man, is nothing.*

Woman: without her, man is nothing.

Although it is difficult to detect the slight mistakes in our writing, proofreading can help the writer go over every single word he/she wrote to check its spelling and endings. Many writers proofread out loud repeating every word many times as it is actually written. Eventually, proofreading is done to refine and clean the text from any potential imperfection in writing.

Example 1

The following paragraph contains many errors in organization, grammar usage, and spelling.

My sister's home on Jefferson Street is terrably noisy. Every five minutes or so a monster jet takes off from the nearby airport and its screeching silences everyone until it passes overhead. So many people travel these days that its difficult to get tickets for certain flights. I'D like to go too Colorado for the summer. Then, too, their is the noise from the heavy traffic in front of the house. I wish they would get a new shopping center for this area. Last and worst, there is the noise from the bulldozing for the new apartment building project in back of my sisters house. You can believe it. My sisters home is a noisy place.

CORRECTED PARAGRAPH

My sister's home on Jefferson Street is terribly noisy. Every five minutes or so, a monster jet takes off from the nearby airport, and its screeching silences everyone until it has passed. Then, too, there is the noise from the heavy traffic in front of the house. Last and worst is the noise from the bulldozing for the apartment complex in the back of her house. My sister's home is definitely a noisy place.

Example 2

Proofread for spelling errors: spell checkers read the following as correct. It's not 'Spell Chequer Pome'

I have a spelling chequer

It came with my PC

It clearly marks for my revue

Mistakes I cannot sea

I've run this pome threw it

I'm shore your please to no

Its letter perfect in its weigh

My chequer tolled me sew.

References

- Hacker, D. (2009). *Rules for writers: 6th edition*. New York. Bedford/St. Martin's
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