

Research Paper 101 Series

Step Seven A: Revising

You've been personally immersed in the reading and writing process. It's time to separate yourself from your draft, step back, and get a fresh perspective. Revising, or re-visioning, is like climbing up to the view point. We can see how far we have come, but we can also get a view of where we need to go.



It's time to step back and examine the view. Re-vision.

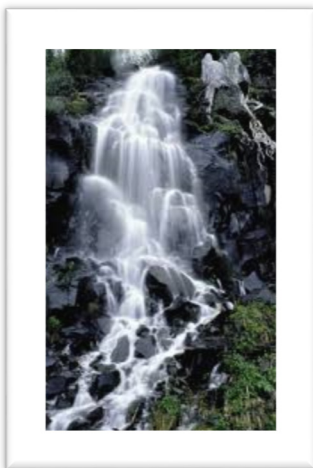
1. *Examine your thesis statement*

Does it still meet your goal? Has your perspective changed since writing your first draft? Is it still the central idea of your paper? Now is the time to adjust it.

2. *Trace your argument through your paper*

Is there a clear, coherent argument that runs from your introduction to your conclusion?

- Does your introduction catch attention as it introduces your argument? Is it clear?
- Do your body paragraphs have topic sentences?
- Are your paragraphs arranged in the most effective order to build your argument?
- Does each paragraph develop its argument effectively?
- Are there details and information that is lacking?
- Is there extraneous information that should be eliminated?
- Does your conclusion address the main points of the paper and drive your argument home?



3. *Does it flow?*

Imagine a cascading waterfall. Water flows from one rock to another, making its way down the mountain. Like a cascading waterfall, your paper must “flow” from one paragraph to another, creating an aesthetic whole. Flow is more than just logical structure. It involves topic sentences, transitions, sentence structure, and clear and concise wording.

Check the structure of your paper

Consider creating a reverse outline. This time, instead of creating the outline from your notes, you will be creating an outline from your draft. List the main idea of each paragraph, or simply copy your topic sentence.

- Do your paragraphs relate back to your thesis?
- Will a reader find it challenging to follow the order of your ideas?
- Do any of your paragraphs repeat ideas?
- Do any of your paragraphs cover too many topics?

This is also a good time to make any adjustments to your outline—especially if it needs to be included with your final draft.

Transitions

Transition sentences help connect information across paragraphs. For example, a transition sentence at the end of a paragraph can inform readers how the information discussed will pertain to information that will be discussed in the paragraph that follows. There are different categories of transitions depending on your purpose.

Type of Transition	Purpose	Examples of Common Terms & Phrases
Additive Transitions	adding information; introducing or highlighting; referencing; showing similarity; clarifying	also, additionally, for example, furthermore, in other words, moreover, particularly, notably, especially, considering, concerning, regarding, similarly, likewise, equally, specifically, namely
Adversative Transitions	contrasting; distinguishing; conceding; dismissing; replacing	but, still, however, while, whereas, conversely, yet, indeed, besides, significantly, primarily, nevertheless, nonetheless, although, despite, regardless, admittedly, even so, in contrast, instead of, rather
Causal Transitions	showing cause; explaining conditions; showing effects; showing purpose	since, for, as, because, if...then, unless, granted that, provided that, consequently, therefore, thus, accordingly, as a result of, so long as, due to, for this reason
Sequential Transitions	organizing by number; continuation; summarizing; digression; concluding	initially, secondly, thirdly, subsequently, previously, afterwards, eventually, next, after, once again, summarizing, as state before, incidentally, coincidentally, thus, hence, ultimately, finally, therefore, altogether, overall, consequently

Do not overuse transitions. Transitions should be strategically placed to make it easier for the reader to understand your point.

Varied wording and sentence structure

Avoid *choppy* writing. If your sentence structure is too repetitive, your paper will sound robotic. Add variety to your sentences using conjunctions and subordinating clauses.

Example:



Witold Pileki's family had a history of political opposition. Pileki's family had been resettled in Russia. (repetitive)



Due to the family's history of political opposition, they were resettled in Russia. (subordinate clause)

Avoid *wordiness*. Don't use jargon or grandiose language. Use the active voice whenever possible.

Analyze your paper for readability and remove any clutter.

Example:



It was the Russian government that forcibly moved the family out of Poland due their ongoing political opposition against the Czar. (passive, wordy)



The Russian government forcibly relocated the family to Russian due to their ongoing opposition to the Czar. (active voice, more concise)

4. Check your use of sources

Look for the places you have cited sources. These should be woven neatly into the fabric of your argument. Make sure you are clarifying for your reader why each "piece of evidence" is important. Read your paper as if you were the evaluator, not the one who has become an "expert" on the subject. Don't assume that your reader will be able to make "jumps of logic" that you can make with your background knowledge. Make your argument obvious.

Next up... Editing