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Good Writers Revise...and Revise...and Revise...

Revision is the key to writing great papers. The writing process depends on it, and with practice, revision can become more natural and less of a chore. Listed below are effective revision strategies that you can use on your own or with the help of other readers. Incorporating these strategies into your writing repertoire will improve your success as an academic writer.

Schedule revision time into your writing process

Revision needs to be treated as an integral part of the writing process, not something that is done at the last minute or haphazardly. When scheduling your writing projects, designate your own deadline a few days or a week before the professor's due date so that you have enough time to revise.

Make sure you answered the assignment

Reread the original assignment to ensure that you have constructed an appropriate response. Have you answered all the questions? Have you referred to recommended source material or class discussions? Have you met the professor's guidelines (e.g., page length, font size, citation style, etc.)? If not, make note of what changes need to be made.

Read your writing out loud

Once you're satisfied that you have answered the assignment, read through your paper out loud. Or ask a friend to read it out loud while you listen. Listening to your writing allows you to hear how your ideas flow and can help you to catch grammatical and mechanical errors.

Summarize the main idea in each paragraph

As you read your writing out loud, make a note in the margin next to each paragraph summing up the main idea represented there. If you haven't expressed a main idea, write a topic sentence that reflects the point you are trying to make. If you have more than one main idea, divide the paragraph appropriately. If you have main ideas that don't relate to

your topic, remove them or revise them so they support your position. In general, use these summary statements to clarify how your ideas are organized.

Create an outline of your draft

With the help of the margin notes you've made, make a diagram of how your ideas are related and of the evidence you use to support those ideas. How does this structure compare with what you originally intended? Are there any gaps in your argument that you need to fill? Are you repeating information needlessly?

Cut and paste

During your revision process, you may discover that although your ideas are represented, they are not organized convincingly. With the help of your margin notes and structural diagram, cut up your paper by paragraphs or sections and paste them together in the desired order. Then, read through the text from beginning to end, revising topic sentences so that your ideas flow into one another smoothly.

Ask a friendly reader to review your paper

Asking someone else to read and respond to your draft is always a great idea. Objective readers are not personally invested in the text, which makes it easier for them to identify errors or confusing logic. Make it a habit to trade papers with a friend, consult a writing advisor, or make an appointment with a learning instructor to discuss your writing assignments.