

# Writing and Revision Tips



Each stage of the writing process is dynamic, and, at times, demanding. But fear not! Here are some tips to help you revise your writing and conquer your assignments with confidence. First, consider thinking about the big picture and identify the global concerns that affect large portions of the paper; this will allow you to save sentence-level concerns such as grammar, word choice, and citations until after you have developed a solid foundation.

## Global Concerns (i.e. content, organization, focus, and structure)

- Have you clearly answered the question(s) posed?  
Many assignments include a central question or series of questions. Be sure to address all of them.
- Have you fulfilled all of the assignment requirements (outside sources, page requirement, citation style, etc.)?
- Have you stated a clear and appropriate thesis?
- Have you organized the paper around clearly stated main points which relate directly to the thesis?  
If you're not sure, try making an outline of the paper **as you've written it**, or write the main idea of each paragraph in the margin next to it. Does your structure make sense?
- Have you backed up each claim with reasonable, sufficient support (date, research, textual evidence, etc.)?
- Are important ideas fully developed?
- Are ideas presented in a logical order?
- Do topic sentences signal new ideas?
- Do you have clear transitions between and within paragraphs?  
Transitions provide the reader with links between ideas. Transitions also relate one sentence to another within paragraphs.
- Are your sentences clear and concise? Does each sentence contain only one idea? Is the draft free of irrelevant or repetitive material?
- Is the voice appropriate—not too stuffy, not too casual?
- Is quoted material introduced with a signal phrase, enclosed within quotation marks (unless it has been set

off from the text in block quote formatting), and documented with a citation?

- Is each quotation word-for-word accurate? If not, do brackets or ellipses indicate the changes or omissions (while still maintaining the intention of the author's original statement)?
- Is the draft free of plagiarism? Are summaries and paraphrases written in the writer's own words—not copied from the source?
- Has source material that is not common knowledge been properly documented?

## Local Concerns (i.e. sentence structure, grammar, word choice, and citation)

Read your draft aloud to a writing assistant at the Connors Writing Center, to a roommate, or even to yourself. Reading aloud forces you to hear your language and recognize errors that you may have previously overlooked.

- Are all of your sentences complete?  
Make sure every sentence has a subject and a verb. Watch out for sentence fragments (sentences missing either a subject or a verb) and run-ons (long sentences that could be broken up into smaller ones).
- Do your subjects and verbs agree? (For example: Because the **students wasn't** paying attention, their subjects and verbs didn't agree).
- Have you checked your spelling?  
Although spell-check is a modern miracle, it isn't perfect. Watch out for homonyms (words that sound the same but mean different things. For example: forth/fourth, weather/whether, there/their/they're) and auto-corrected words.
- Have you checked your punctuation?
- Have you checked your word use?  
A thesaurus can be a great tool, but it must be used with caution. Make sure you double-check the meaning of words before using them.
- Have you made sure that your paper has one verb tense and sticks to it?  
For example: Mark Twain was a funny writer. He is always making jokes in his writing.
- Have you checked your pronouns?  
Don't write "they" when you mean "he" or "she."
- If you would like to learn more about grammar and usage, check out our handouts online at <http://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc/handouts/> or pick one up at the Connors Writing Center.

This handout was adapted from *The St. Martin's Handbook* 5th Edition, edited by Andrea A. Lunsford. Bedford/St. Martin's 2003.