

A perfect paper on the first try is a myth; effective writing is the result of three stages of work: **revision, editing, and proofreading**. After writing a first draft, take a break to make sure you have a clear mind when reviewing your work.

Revising Your Work

The first and most important step of revising is to compare your essay to the assignment prompt. Does your work meet all of the instructor's requirements? If not, start there *before* making any other revisions.

During revision, writers **rethink the purpose** of the paper to improve its focus or add new details to strengthen the message. Ask yourself the following questions:

- A. Does the **introductory** paragraph engage readers and make them want to keep reading?
 - B. Does the **thesis statement** (main idea) let the audience know what to expect in the paper?
 - C. Does the essay contain **well-developed ideas** to support the main idea?
 - D. Is the paper organized with transitions words and phrases? Generally, **each paragraph should be focused on a single topic**. How can you improve **the flow of ideas**?
 - E. Is there a **satisfying conclusion** that summarizes the thesis and supporting ideas?
 - F. If you have used information that you heard, saw, or read somewhere else, **are your sources cited**?
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Editing Your Paper

Now that you have revised for focus and supporting ideas, make sentence-level edits in order to **clarify ideas and improve consistency**. Use these tips to help you edit your work:

1. Read the paper aloud. This forces you to slow down to see and hear whether the words and sentences are what you meant to say.
 - a. If you're not sure what to look for as you read, consider whether there are any sentences that caused you to stop and reread. This is a clue that you might need to edit that sentence.
 2. Get feedback by having someone else (a classmate, friend, or tutor in the Success Center) read your work aloud too. What did you notice as you listened? Be sure and make recommended changes.
 3. Look for grammatical issues that confuse the meaning, such as incomplete ideas and verb tense/agreement problems. ***If you are not sure how, ask a Success Center tutor!***
 4. Use clear wording. Where can you use more specific nouns? Where can you take out unnecessary phrases?
 5. Avoid announcements such as "my next point is." Use transitional phrases (however or in addition).
 6. Consider using synonyms to replace any unnecessary repeated, vague, or informal words.
 7. Break up lengthy sentences to help keep the meaning clear.
 8. Keep an academic writing tone. Avoid using *you* or *we* in academic writing unless your instructor allows it. Substitute it with a more specific noun ("Americans").
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Proofreading Your Paper

Proofreading is the last step before submitting a final draft to an instructor. If you discover the purpose of your essay is not obvious or you haven't accurately cited your sources, then continue revising.

Proofreading helps **find and correct *minor errors***. Use the following strategies and checklist as you or someone else proofreads your work.

- Print out your paper since reading on a device can cause you to skim over errors. Double space to allow room for comments.
- Read your paper out of order to focus on each sentence individually.

Proofreading Checklist Common-Errors

Capitalization:

- Proper Nouns - the specific name for an individual person, place, or organization
- The first word of all complete sentences
- The first word in a quotation unless an ellipse has been used to indicate that the words preceding the text were omitted from the paper.
- In MLA: words in titles, except articles (the, a, an), prepositions (of, for), and conjunctions (and, but)
- In APA Style: only the first word of a title and any proper nouns it contains

Hyphenate:

- Numbers written in words
- Prefixes and suffixes
- Compound adjectives (well-known)

Italicize:

- Titles of long works (books, movies, plays, *The Simpsons*, etc.)
- Definitions or in a foreign language in your paper (unless the words are well known, such as *résumé*),

Use Quotation Marks:

- Titles of short works or works-within-works (short stories, articles, television episodes, etc.)

Use Abbreviations and Acronyms:

- Abbreviate titles (such as Dr. or Mr.)
- Spell out the proper names: Federal Bureau of Investigation, (FBI), then use the acronym after that.

Sources:

MLA Handbook. 9th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2021.

Raimes, Ann, and Susan K. Miller-Cochran. *Keys for Writers*. 8th ed., Cengage Learning. 2016.