

7

Revise

Improve What You've Written

Learning Objectives

- Revise an essay and identify the major areas of concern in the draft essay
- Revise an essay to improve organization, coherence, and unity
- Use peer reviews and checklists to assist with revision

You may think that a completed first draft means that little improvement is needed. However, even experienced writers need to improve their drafts and rely on peers during the revising and editing stages. Just like a painter might go back to a painting and add some new brushstrokes or like an architect might go back to the first draft of a blueprint to make improvements, a writer returns to the first draft of an essay to improve it through revision.

Revise and edit in stages: do not expect to catch everything at once. Each time you review your essay focus on a different aspect of construction so that you will be more likely to catch any mistakes or identify any issues. This chapter contains checklists that identify specific things to look for with each revision.

The Purpose of Revision

In the **revision**, you take a second look at the *ideas* you've expressed in your writing, with the aim of conveying those ideas more clearly and more accurately. You also revise to make your ideas seem more interesting and more convincing.

In this stage, a writer reviews what they have written by reading the first draft several times to consider, reconsider, and reshape its content. This stage involves both moderate and major changes: adding or deleting a paragraph, phrasing the main point differently, expanding on an important idea, moving a sentence from one paragraph to another, rearranging paragraphs, deleting a sentence, and so

forth. At this stage, the writer may go through several drafts before settling on a final draft in which the key points are logically and articulately presented.

An effective essay is organized, coherent, and unified. **Organization** means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. **Coherence** means that the elements of your essay work together smoothly and naturally and information from research is seamlessly integrated with your ideas. **Unity** means that all the ideas in each paragraph in the entire essay fit together and contribute to the overall message and a cohesive whole.

This chapter will examine each of these aspects in more detail. The practice exercises will help you effectively revise an essay of your own, step by step.

Strategies for Revision

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused—too soon in the process—on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographical entries. These details do matter—eventually. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to first spend time reviewing and revising the content—the ideas—of the paper.

To get the most out of your revisions, use strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them throughout the writing process; keep using the ones that bring results.

- Set aside your writing for at least a few hours, preferably a day or two, until you can look at it objectively.
- Revise in stages: first focus on organization, then on coherence, then on unity; if possible, take a break of at least a few hours between each stage.
- Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Pretend you are the reader. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?

For many people, the words *critic*, *critical*, and *criticism* provoke only negative feelings. However, as a writer and a thinker, you must learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. To do this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

Revising allows you to examine important aspects of your writing separately so that you can give each task your undivided attention.

Revise to Improve Organization

When you revise to improve organization, look at the flow of ideas throughout the whole essay and within individual paragraphs. Check to see that the essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion and that each section reinforces the thesis.

Use [Checklist 7.1: Revise for Organization](#) to help you revise for organization.

CHECKLIST 7.1: REVISE FOR ORGANIZATION

At the essay level

- ☐ Does the introductory paragraph proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?
- ☐ Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
- ☐ Do the body paragraphs flow in a logical order? Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- ☐ Does the concluding paragraph summarize the main ideas and revisit the thesis?



9

At the paragraph level

- ☐ Does the topic sentence of each body paragraph clearly state a main idea that supports the thesis?
- ☐ Do the details in the paragraph relate to and support the topic sentence?
- ☐ Should I rearrange or revise any sentences or add transitions to improve the flow of sentences?
- ☐ Should I add transitions to make the flow of ideas clearer?

Jorge, a student writing an essay on the importance of storytelling for an Indigenous studies course rereads the first draft of his essay paragraph by paragraph. As he reads, he highlights the main idea of each paragraph so he can see whether his ideas proceed in a logical order.

For the most part, the flow of main ideas is clear throughout the body of the essay. However, Jorge does notice that one body paragraph does not have a clearly expressed main idea:

Some stories simply entertain. Most people like a good, fun story, regardless of their culture. A story about a deer hunt might actually be a means of teaching the geographic location of hunting grounds (Silko 4). A story might serve a dual purpose. Even entertaining narrative stories serve an educational purpose. Little Bear says stories are an integral part of Native education (81). Storytelling is a way to teach knowledge, customs, and values (81). Stories transmit a culture's creation narrative. King says a culture's creation story shapes its worldview. "We live by stories" (King 153). Creating worldview is perhaps the top job stories have.

During revision, Jorge adds a topic sentence that clearly states the main idea of this paragraph and connects it to the paragraph that precedes it. He also reverses the order of two sentences, in blue below because he thinks that's a better way to introduce the example of the deer hunt. Finally, he adds transitional words to improve the flow of ideas from sentence to sentence. Read Jorge's revised paragraph:

In Indigenous cultures, stories perform a wide variety of functions. Some stories simply entertain. Most people like a good, fun story, regardless of their culture. **A story might serve a dual purpose. A story about a deer hunt might actually be a means of teaching the geographic location of hunting grounds (Silko 4).** **Therefore,** even entertaining stories serve an educational purpose. Little Bear says stories are an integral part of Native education **because** storytelling is a way to teach knowledge, customs, and values (81). **Of course,** stories **also** transmit a culture's creation narrative. King says a culture's creation story shapes its worldview. "We live by stories" (King 153). **Thus,** creating worldview is perhaps the top job stories have.

Does the addition of a topic sentence help you identify the main idea of the paragraph? Did Jorge make a good decision when he reversed the order of the two sentences in blue? How does the addition of transitions improve organization and the flow of ideas?

We'll continue to follow the progress of Jorge's essay through the revision and editing stages.

PRACTICE 7.1

Use the following steps to revise an essay you are working on.

Print out a hard copy of your essay. Most people read more slowly and closely on paper than on a computer screen. Printing your essay on paper will allow you to spot errors that you might not notice on the screen.

Read your paper paragraph by paragraph. Highlight your thesis and the topic sentence of each paragraph.

Using the thesis and topic sentences as starting points, outline the ideas you presented—just as you would do if you were outlining a chapter in a textbook. You may write in the margins of your draft or create a formal outline on a separate sheet of paper. Do not look at the formal outline you created during the planning stage.

Next, reread your paper more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or recasting a sentence would make the ideas flow more logically.

Review the topics in the outline you just made. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where you may need to reorganize ideas.

Begin to revise your paper to improve organization. Start with any major issues, such as needing to move an entire paragraph. Then proceed to minor revisions, such as adding a transitional phrase or tweaking a topic sentence so it connects ideas more clearly.

Collaboration: Exchange essays with a classmate. Repeat the six steps and take notes about each other's essays. Share and compare notes.

Revise to Improve Coherence

When a piece of writing has **coherence**, the ideas flow smoothly. The wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph.

When you revise to improve coherence, you analyze how the parts of your essay work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out-of-place material fits in smoothly.

In research papers, problems with coherence usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect.

Use [Checklist 7.2: Revise for Coherence](#) to review your essay for coherence.

CHECKLIST 7.2: REVISE FOR COHERENCE



9

- ☐ Does the opening of the essay clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis? Make sure any entertaining quotes or anecdotes serve a clear purpose. (If not, remove them.)
- ☐ Have I included support from research for each main point in the body of the paper?
- ☐ Have I included introductory material before any quotations? (Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph.)
- ☐ Do paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
- ☐ Do I need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
- ☐ Are there any places where I have overused material from sources?
- ☐ Does the concluding paragraph make sense based on the rest of the paper? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.

Rereading his revised paragraph once more, Jorge looks to see how the different pieces fit together to prove his thesis. He realizes that some of the supporting information needs to be integrated more carefully, and he decides to delete one complete sentence. Read the following paragraph first without Jorge's revisions and then with them. How do the changes improve coherence?

In Indigenous cultures, stories perform a wide variety of functions. Some stories simply entertain, ~~Most people like a good, fun story, regardless of their culture.~~ but a story might serve a dual purpose. **For example**, a story about a deer hunt might actually be a means of teaching the geographic location of hunting grounds (Silko 4). Therefore, even entertaining stories serve an educational purpose. **According to Leroy Little Bear, a Blackfoot educator**, stories are an integral part of Native education because storytelling is a way to teach knowledge, customs, and values (81). Of course, stories also transmit a culture's creation narrative. ~~King says a culture's creation story shapes its worldview. "We live by stories" (King 153).~~ **Cherokee writer Thomas King says, "We live by stories" (153), pointing** out that a culture's creation story shapes its worldview. Thus, creating worldview is perhaps the top job stories have.

Jorge decides that his comment about people enjoying fun stories seems subjective and is not necessary to making his point, so he deletes it; then he connects the sentence before the omission to the one that comes after it. This new sentence now nicely connects to the example of the deer hunt, so Jorge adds the words "for example" to emphasize that connection.

Jorge also realizes he hasn't integrated his research sources effectively. How would his readers know who Little Bear or King are—or why their opinions should be taken seriously? To integrate the research more smoothly, Jorge briefly introduces each source. He establishes the credibility of the sources by pointing out that one is an educator and one is a writer—and both are Indigenous. By pointing out the credibility of his sources, Jorge improves the credibility of his own essay.

Finally, Jorge notices that the quotation at the end of the paragraph is awkwardly placed and not as effective as it could be, so he integrates the quotation into his sentence. (You will learn more about "dropped" quotations and integrated quotations in [Part 5](#)).

TIP: Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas—for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure the transitions you choose have the meaning that suits your purpose, and avoid overusing the same ones.



9

Using Transitional Words to Create Coherence

Writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and provide a polished finish to your essays. The list below contains common transitional words and phrases grouped by their purpose.

Transitions That Show Sequence or Time

- after
- before
- later
- afterward
- before long
- meanwhile
- as soon as
- finally
- next
- at first
- first, second, third
- soon
- at last
- in the first place
- then

Transitions That Show Position

- above
- across
- at the bottom
- at the top
- behind
- below
- beside
- beyond
- inside
- near
- next to
- opposite

- to the left, to the right, to the side
- under
- where

Transitions That Show a Conclusion

- indeed
- hence
- in conclusion
- in the final analysis
- therefore
- thus

Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought

- consequently
- furthermore
- additionally
- because
- besides the fact
- following this idea
- further
- in addition
- in the same way
- moreover
- looking further
- considering . . . , it is clear that

Transitions That Change a Line of Thought

- but
- yet
- however
- nevertheless
- on the contrary
- on the other hand
- conversely

Transitions That Show Importance

- above all
- best
- especially
- in fact
- more important
- most important



- most
- worst

Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay

- finally
- last
- in conclusion
- most of all
- least of all
- last of all

All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs

- admittedly
- at this point
- certainly
- granted it is true
- generally speaking
- in general
- in this situation
- no doubt
- no one denies
- obviously
- of course
- to be sure
- undoubtedly
- unquestionably

Transitions That Introduce Examples

- for instance
- for example
- such as

Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps

- first, second, third
- generally, furthermore, finally
- in the first place, also, last
- in the first place, furthermore, finally
- in the first place, likewise, lastly

With that said, transitions *can* be overused. If every sentence in a paragraph begins with a transition word, the effect can be distracting for the reader. Imagine if a friend were telling you a story and used transition at the beginning of every sentence: “First, I did this. . . . Then I did that. . . . Next, I. . . . The I. . . . After that, I. . . .” Soon you would find yourself paying more attention to the repetitive transition



than the story itself.

To decide whether a transitional word is necessary, look at the relationship between two sentences (two paragraphs). Ask yourself, "Is the connection between the two perfectly clear?" If so, a transitional word might not be necessary. However, if the connection is not perfectly clear, consider adding a transitional word or phrase.

Students often choose transitions carelessly, as if they were interchangeable, but they aren't. The choice of a transition can drastically change the meaning of sentences.

Notice the differences in meaning in these pairs of sentences, solely the result of choosing a different transition:

- A. Our profits are down this year. However, we will hire four new staff.
- B. Our profits are down this year. Nevertheless, we will hire four new staff.
- C. Our profits are down this year. Thus, we will hire four new staff.
- D. Our profits are down this year. Therefore, we will hire four new staff.
- E. Our profits are down this year. Moreover, we will hire four new staff.
- F. Our profits are down this year. Additionally, we will hire four new staff.
- G. Our profits are down this year. Meanwhile, we will hire four new staff.

PRACTICE 7.2

1. What do the transitions in A and B imply about the relationship between profits and hiring?
2. What do the transitions in C and D imply about that relationship, and how is the implication different from the one in A and B?
3. What effect do the transitions in E, F, and G have? What do these transitions imply about the relationship between profits and hiring?

Choose transitional words carefully so that the transition clarifies and enhances the relationship between the two sentences. A transitional word should never create confusion. If it does, omit it.

In [Chapters 4](#) and [5](#), we discussed Mariah's steps from a vague idea to a formal outline, which culminated in a first draft in [Chapter 6](#). Now Mariah is ready to revise her essay about media, and she examines her paragraph about televisions to check for coherence. She looks for places where she needs to add a transition or perhaps reword the text to make the flow of ideas clear. In the version that follows she has already deleted the sentences that are off topic.

Sample Revision Focusing on Coherence

Finally, nothing is more confusing than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and movies on. There's good reason for this confusion: You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. The first big decision is the screen resolution you want.

Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The second ~~other~~ important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't let someone make you buy more television than you need!

TIP: Many writers make their revisions on a printed copy and then transfer them to the version on screen. They conventionally use a small arrow called a caret (^) to show where to insert an addition or correction.

PRACTICE 7.3

Answer the following questions about Mariah's revised paragraph.

Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which would you keep, and which were unnecessary? Explain.

Which transition words or phrases did Mariah add to her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?

What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.

PRACTICE 7.4

Using the same draft of the essay that you used for [Practice 7.1](#), follow these steps to begin revising your paper to improve coherence.

Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from [Practice 7.1](#).

Read the body paragraphs of your essay first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph.

Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete.

Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources.

Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations.

Review these paragraphs carefully for coherence.

Review the introductory paragraph and concluding paragraph. Make sure the information presented works with the ideas in the body of the paper.

Revise the places you identified in your paper to improve coherence.

Collaboration: Exchange essays with a classmate. Repeat the six steps above and take notes about each other's essays. Share and compare notes.



9

Writing at Work

Understanding coherence can also benefit you in the workplace, especially when you have to write and deliver a presentation. Speakers sometimes rely on cute graphics or funny quotations to hold their audience's attention. If you choose to use these elements, make sure they work well with the substantive content of your presentation. For example, if you are asked to give a financial presentation, and the financial report shows that the company lost money, funny illustrations would not be relevant or appropriate for the presentation.

TIP: Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence that you might not notice otherwise. Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes.

Revise to Improve Unity

When a piece of writing has **unity**, all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong together, and nothing seems unrelated or out of place.

Sometimes, writers get caught up in the moment and cannot resist a good digression. Even though you might enjoy such detours when you chat with friends, unplanned digressions usually weaken a piece of writing.

Following your outline closely offers you a reasonable guarantee that your writing will stay on purpose and not drift away from the controlling idea. However, when writers are rushed, are tired, or cannot find the right words, their writing may no longer be clear and concise, and they may add information that is not relevant to developing the main idea.

Mariah stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of the essay tentatively titled "Confusing Digital Technology." But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset the student enough that she digressed from the main topic of the third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited.

When Mariah revises the essay, she deletes the off-topic sentences that affect the unity of the paragraph. Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Mariah's changes and the second time with them.

Sample Revision Focusing on Unity

Nothing is more confusing than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and movies on. ~~You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs.~~ You face decisions you

never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. ~~The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions.~~ The ~~other~~ important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. ~~But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints.~~ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't ~~let someone make you~~ buy more television than you need!

PRACTICE 7.5

Answer the following two questions about Mariah's paragraph:

Do you agree with the decision to make the deletions? Did the student cut too much, too little, or just enough? Explain.

Is the explanation of what screen resolution means a digression? Or is it audience friendly and essential to understanding the paragraph? Explain.

Collaboration: Share with a classmate and compare your answers.

PRACTICE 7.6

Use the same draft of the essay that you used for [Practice 7.1](#) and [Practice 7.4](#), and reread it to look for any statements that weaken the unity of the writing. Are there any sentences, ideas, facts, or quotations that don't belong? Ask a peer for a second opinion. Then decide how best to revise.

TIP: When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read the essay straight through once to locate any problems with organization. Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. Read it a third time, focusing on unity. While this process may seem time-consuming, it is essential to creating a polished final text. You may follow this same strategy during other stages of the writing process and for any type of writing.

Writing at Work

One of the reasons word-processing programs offer a reviewing feature is that work groups have become common in many businesses. Writing is often collaborative, and the members of a work group and their supervisors often critique group members' work and offer feedback that will lead to a better final

product.

Peer Review: Revision

After working closely with a piece of writing, a writer often needs to step back and ask a more objective reader for feedback.

Because writers know what they *intended* to say, they often find it difficult to evaluate whether their writing *actually conveys* what they intended. As we read our own writing, our minds fill in the gaps, adding missing information and making connections between ideas and words.

Therefore, writers can benefit from feedback from a reader who can respond to only the words on the page—in other words, because the reader doesn't have access to what's in the writer's mind or what the writer intended, the reader must make meaning solely from what is written. The reader can then help the writer understand whether the words on the page convey what the writer intended.

Once you've revised the draft of your essay, ask a peer to give you feedback on it. Choose someone you trust, someone who knows about essay writing and/or your topic, and someone who will be honest about the strengths and weaknesses of your essay. The person needs to be able to identify and communicate specific ways to strengthen your essay. You might choose a classmate, a friend, or a family member, but choose carefully.

The purpose of peer review is to receive constructive criticism of your essay. Your peer is your first real audience, and from your peer, you can learn what confuses a reader—and what delights a reader. Use this feedback to improve the next draft of your essay before sharing it with your instructor or a wide audience.

Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that effectively conveys a central message to a specific audience to fulfill a purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease.

Afterward, evaluate your partner's feedback and assess what is most helpful to you. Then use the feedback to revise your draft.

TIP: While your peer is reading your essay, they should not verbally ask you to clarify or provide more information. If your reviewer needs you to verbally fill in the blanks in order to understand your essay, that tells you the essay needs more revisions, because all the ideas should be fully explained in the words on the page. If your reviewer needs to ask, "What did you mean here?" or "Why did you include this?" or "Should you explain that?" those questions tell you that the words you've written have not fully conveyed the ideas you have in your mind. Those questions should be saved for the discussion afterward. This is useful feedback that will help you revise your essay to make it clearer.

TIP: Remember to be courteous, respectful, and polite when giving feedback to a peer. Your feedback should be positive and constructive.

PRACTICE 7.7

Ask a peer to review your essay and provide feedback on *what* you've written so that you can more effectively revise your essay.

Step 1: In preparation for peer review, fill out this information about your essay and share it with your reviewer:

Date: _____

Writer's name: _____

Title of essay: _____

Topic of essay: _____

Audience: _____

Purpose of Essay: _____

Peer reviewer's name: _____

Step 2: Ask your peer reviewer to carefully read your essay in order to provide you with feedback that will help you revise your essay. Your reviewer should follow these steps:

1. Read the checklist below *before* reading the essay so that you know what to look for.
2. Carefully read the essay, focusing on the questions in the checklist. Make notes as you go.
3. Do not ask the writer to clarify or explain anything as you read. If required information is missing from the essay, make a note of the gaps. If you are confused about something, make a note.

Step 3: Go through the checklist with your reviewer and discuss the answers to each question. Ask for clarification if you don't understand some of the feedback.

CHECKLIST 7.3: PEER REVIEW: REVISING FOR ORGANIZATION, COHERENCE, AND UNITY

- ☐ Does the title of the essay effectively introduce the topic and suggest the controlling idea?

See [Chapter 14: Write an Effective Essay Title](#)

- ☐ Does the title indicate the type of essay (if applicable)?
- ☐ Does the introductory paragraph introduce the topic and provide sufficient background information?

See [Chapter 14: The Introductory Paragraph](#)

- ☐ Is the thesis (the controlling idea) clearly stated in the first paragraph?

See [Chapter 12: Thesis Statements](#)

- ☐ Does the thesis statement indicate the topic *and* present an argument?
- ☐ Does the thesis statement catch the reader's attention?
- ☐ Are the body paragraphs arranged in a logical order according to a specific organizational pattern? If so, which one?

See [Chapter 5: Methods of Organization](#)

- ☐ Would rearranging the paragraphs support the thesis better?

- ☐ Does each body paragraph contain a topic sentence that introduces the controlling idea of that paragraph?

See [Chapter 11: Effective Topic Sentences](#)

- ☐ Does each paragraph contain several supporting details (descriptions, facts, quotations, reasons, and arguments) to support the topic sentence?

See [Chapter 11: Supporting Sentences](#)

- ☐ Is each supporting detail specific, concrete, and relevant to the topic sentence?
- ☐ Does each sentence logically follow the preceding one? If not, identify any off-topic sentences.
- ☐ Does each body paragraph have only one main point?
- ☐ Are there transitional words to help the reader follow the thoughts? If not, should some be added? Are there too many? If so, which are unnecessary?

See [Chapter 11: Transitions](#)

- ☐ Does each body paragraph end with a closing statement that sums up the point of the paragraph?

See [Chapter 11: Closing Sentences](#)

- ☐ Is the concluding paragraph comprehensive, and does it summarize the main points of the essay in different words?

See [Chapter 14: The Concluding Paragraph](#)

- ☐ Does the essay meet the needs of the assignment's purpose and fulfill the audience, genre, and length requirements?

See [Chapter 5: First Things First: Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content](#)

Step 4:

Ask your reviewer to fill out the following information about your essay:

This essay is about _____

The main points in this essay are _____

What I most liked about this essay is _____

These three points struck me as the strongest:

Point: _____

Why: _____

Point: _____

Why: _____

Point: _____

Why: _____

Do you believe in what the writer has written? _____

These parts of the essay are not clear to me:

Where: _____

Needs improvement because _____

Where: _____

Needs improvement because _____

Where: _____

Needs improvement because _____

After reading the essay, I have these three questions:

The one additional change that would improve this essay significantly is

Step 5: With your reviewer, discuss the feedback from step 4. Ask for clarification as necessary.

Deciding How to Use (or Not Use) Feedback from Peer Review

It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. Some feedback will not apply to your particular situation. Other feedback may be unhelpful or even wrong.

However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to consider that feedback in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comment about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

You might get feedback from more than one reader as you share different stages of your revised draft and you might receive distinct feedback from each individual reader.

Evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.

Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience.

Then, using these standards, accept or reject feedback.

PRACTICE 7.8

Consider the feedback you received from the peer review. Which is most helpful? Jot notes below.

The most helpful feedback was _____

I noticed this pattern in the feedback: _____

In my final revision, I will use my partner's feedback to make this change:

One piece of feedback I will *not* use is

_____ because

You should now be confident you have produced a strong argument that is well constructed and will persuade your audience that your points and point of view are valid. In the [next chapter](#), you'll learn how to take the next step: polishing your writing.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In the revision stage, improve *what* is written:

- Review the ideas presented in the first draft and ensure they are conveyed clearly, logically, and thoroughly; add, cut, or move information to improve content.
- Review the organization of the essay and ensure there is a logical argument progressing from the introduction to the body to the conclusion; make changes to improve the order in which ideas are presented and the connections between ideas and sections of the essay.
- Assess coherence: the elements of an essay should work together smoothly and naturally.
- Assess unity: all ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay should clearly belong together.
- In a research paper, determine whether all included information is relevant to the thesis and is smoothly integrated into the paragraphs.
- Devote sufficient time to revision: it will significantly improve your essay.
- Peer review gives writers helpful feedback about the ideas expressed in their writing.
- It is the writer's responsibility to evaluate the results of peer review and incorporate only useful feedback.