Revising Your Paper

Self-Revision by the Author(s)

Revision of your writing is an on-going process from the time you begin until the final copy is submitted. A strategy that works for many people is to write out an initial draft in total without substantial revision and then let it sit for a day. Come back to it then and begin revising your paper working from a *global perspective* (overall organization) to *paragraph content and organization* and finally down to *sentence level line editing*. Implicit in these instructions is the assumption that you are checking the content for scientific correctness and accuracy.

- **GLOBAL**
  - check the sequence of ideas/background/content in each section for logical progression (*your topic sentences should do this*).
  - check for a strong relationship of ideas between the Introduction (*what we knew before our study*) and the Discussion (*how our study changes or supports our previous understanding*).

- **PARAGRAPH**
  - check that each paragraph has a **coherent topic sentence,** most often as the lead sentence.
  - in each paragraph do the **other sentences support the topic sentence**?
  - check the **transitions between paragraphs** to ensure they are *logical* and *smooth.*

- **LINE EDITING**
  - check for *consistent* and *correct* use of **terminology.**
  - can you change a passive verb construction to an **active verb**?
  - eliminate **superfluous lead phrases** (*Once that was done, ..*).
  - remove all **colloquial language.**
  - check for **redundancy** (i.e., places where you repeat what you have said elsewhere).
  - read each senetence closely for **clarity** and **brevity. Can you say the same thing with fewer words?**
  - READ THE PAPER ALOUD to find those quirky sentences that you wrote while still half asleep - if doesn't sound correct when spoken aloud, it will read even more oddly.

- **MISCELLANEOUS**
    - o check that all of your **sources are cited correctly** in the text.
    - o check the **numbering sequence of your tables and figures.**
    - o check the **Literature Cited** for completeness and correct format.
    - o check the **line spacing between headings and text**, and Tables and Figures and text.
    - o check the **page breaks** to make sure you do not split tables or figures.
    - o are the **authors' names** spelled correctly?
    - o run spell check on the document to find **typographical errors** and read carefully for **spelling** and **grammatical errors**.
    - o check your main headings and subheadings for proper case and placement.

Revision After Peer Critique

After reading carefully the comments and suggestions to improve your paper, discuss them with the reviewer (when possible) to get clarification or to argue your point, if you should disagree. In general, you will make the changes *as suggested* by the reviewer unless you have good, and justifiable, reasons not to.

Once you are clear on the changes to be made, approach the revision using the same *global*, *paragraph*, *line editing* strategy.

- Make the global changes first and recheck the items listed previously.
- Make the paragraph level changes and recheck list.
- Make the line edit changes and recheck the list.
- Recheck the miscelleaneous items.

Final Revision

If possible, have your reviewer examine the paper again (cookies help!) one last time. For PI courses, this is the opportunity for co-authors to check the final draft to make sure it satisfies their expectations. If all the changes have been made to everyone's satisfaction, make one last check of overall appearance of the document to catch recalcitrant page breaks, etc.