

Revising and Proofreading - Reference

Revising should be done with any written work before submission. The two main areas to look at in regard to structure are the **overall structure** and the **sentence structure**. Specifically, within a sentence, the focus is on **grammar** and **syntax**.

Overall Structure

Most essays have a three-part structure: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.

Introduction

The introduction is the part of the writing that first presents and establishes the essay and its main argument. The introduction should:

- be interesting enough to attract the reader's attention and interest
- tell the reader your main point – your thesis
- tell the reader what to expect (give an idea of the main points that will follow)

When revising the introduction, ask yourself:

1. Does the essay fulfill the assignment expectations and answer the questions?
2. Do I have a clear thesis?

Body

The body is the part of the essay that contains the main arguments and information.

When revising the body, ask yourself:

1. Does each paragraph have **one** subject or main idea? (If there is more than one main idea in a paragraph, split the ideas into separate paragraphs)
2. Does each paragraph fully support its main idea?
3. Are the main ideas in each paragraph connected to my thesis?
4. Have I used transitional words to link ideas together? (transitional words can be used to link sentences together in the same paragraph or at the beginning of a paragraph to connect two paragraphs. Some transitional words and phrases are: **subsequently, consequently, equally, as a result, in addition**)

5. Do I know the exact meaning of synonyms I have found in a thesaurus? Do they make sense in the context in which they are being used?
6. Is it clear which antecedent a pronoun is referring to?
7. Do all pronouns agree with their antecedents?
8. Have I varied the way that quotes are used in the writing?

Some ways to introduce quotes are:

- The author argues that “...
- According to the author, “...
- Mr. Smith said, “...
- Mr. Smith mentioned, “...
- Mr. Smith suggested, “...

Conclusion

The conclusion is the part of the writing that talks briefly about the whole argument and main points. **No new points or ideas** should be introduced. The conclusion should:

- be forceful
- be interesting enough to stimulate the reader
- make the reader think more about the topic

When revising the body, ask yourself:

1. Have I summarized my main points?
2. Have I restated my thesis in different words?

Sentence Structure

When revising, read each sentence individually. Grammar and syntax are details that can improve your writing. To check, look to see if:

- your sentences make sense
- you use a variety of sentence structures
- your sentences clearly communicate full ideas

Grammar

Some ways to edit grammar include checking articles, subject verb agreements, and correct punctuation. Please review the following rules:

Articles

- make sure all singular count nouns use an article (a, an, the) or a determiner (this, that, his, her, etc.)
- make sure that when using “the”, the noun that follows is specific and known to your reader

Verbs

- and subjects must agree whether the subject is singular or plural
- tenses should not change unless there is a good reason for them to

Commas

- are used after words, phrases, or clauses that introduce paragraphs or sentences
- are used before and after words or phrases that interrupt sentences
- are used to separate items in a list

Semi-colons

- are used to connect two independent clauses (full sentences)

Colons

- are used to introduce an idea after the colon: a word, a list of words, or a quotation

Apostrophes

- are used to show possession: Dan's bicycle (note that if a proper noun ends in the letter "s", the apostrophe just follows without adding another: Jess' bicycle)

Syntax

Rearranging the word order in your sentences can help increase the clarity and understanding for readers. The following are some tips that will help improve your syntax:

- use coordinating conjunctions to connect clauses, phrases, or words to other clauses phrases or words (remember **FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**)
- use subordinating conjunctions to connect clauses to phrases and words, phrases to clauses and words, or words to clauses and phrases (examples: **when, where, because, although**)
- use only as many words as are needed and avoid saying the same thing over and over