

Understanding Revision and Editing

A Writing Resource created by Dr. Vidya Natarajan for The Write Place

Revising your essay means attending to **overall** argument, structure, organization, and often implies rewriting entire passages to improve clarity, flow, depth, and focus; editing is a more **surface-level** check, to ensure that individual words are well-chosen, and that individual sentences are correct.

Revision checklist (higher order concerns)

- Have you addressed the essay **question** or prompt? (purpose)
- Have you considered your **audience** (e.g., academic vs. popular writing)?
- Have you written a strong **thesis**? (an argument--not a question!)
- Have you **defined your terms** to help your reader follow your argument?
- Does each body paragraph have a strong **connection** to the points/ideas in the thesis, in the same **sequence** as the thesis?
- Have you done enough **research**? (Most essays would get a better grade by deepening their research focus and number of sources.) Have you added concrete **examples**?
- Have you begun with a strong **hook**?
- Have you written a **good conclusion**, adding richness to your ideas?
- Does your title capture the specific content of your essay? (academic essays often have **A catchy title: A subtitle specifying what your essay is addressing**).

Editing checklist (lower order concerns)

- Have you correctly **paraphrased, quoted, or summarized** from your sources?
- Have you **cited** each source correctly, and do your **in-text citations** match your Works Cited/References page? Have you followed MLA or APA **format** down to the last detail?
- Have you written **clear** and **grammatically correct** sentences?
- Have you **punctuated** correctly (including in your citations)?
- Have you **spelled** all your words correctly?
- Have you **presented** your work in the required format (MLA or APA) from the first page to the last?