

## Revision vs. Editing

Producing a successful paper is a process. You begin by planning and invention, then research if required. You may also prepare an outline or make some notes early in the process. After these steps, you write your first draft. It's okay for this rough draft to be "messy," that's part of the process.

After you've finished your rough draft, you're ready to begin the revision and edit process. Now you begin to "tighten" and "clean-up" the paper. Your first step in this process is to take some time away from your paper. Take a break for an hour or two, maybe even a day or two, and then come back to the paper.

As you return to the paper, it is important to be aware of the difference between the two tasks of revising and editing.

**REVISING** is basically "re-seeing" your paper as a whole. Taking some time away from your essay should allow you to return and "see" it in a new light. When revising, focus on the big picture; don't worry about grammar and mechanics issues. Revising should address Higher Order Concerns (HOC)—is your thesis or focus sound? Have you addressed the audience and purpose, organization, and development in a manner that successfully meets the assignment requirements? Do you provide sufficient supporting evidence? Rebuttal information? If not—revise, re-organize, or re-write to improve. One tip that may help is to do a "reverse outline." Outline your paper as it is written, identifying your thesis, your paragraphs' topic sentences, main points, and evidence.

**EDITING** begins moving toward Lower Order Concerns (LOC) such as word choice, clarity, conciseness, and eventually grammar and mechanics. In this stage, focus on the individual sentences. Are they clear? Concise? Does your word choice convey exactly what you meant to say? Could you re-order your sentence structure, and/or syntax, for more emphasis? The Paramedic Method will help you improve the conciseness of your sentence. An explanation of this method follows.

### Paramedic Method: A Lesson in Writing Concisely

Use the Paramedic Method (originally developed by Richard Lanham in *Revising Prose*) to edit any kind of professional writing. Editing your professional writing using the Paramedic Method will make your prose easier to read. Sentences that are easy to read are more persuasive and more user-centered.

Professional writers understand the need for clear, concise prose. An industry standard for helping workplace writers achieve user-centered, persuasive, and clear prose is the Paramedic Method. When you use the Paramedic Method, you will reduce your word count by eliminating unnecessary words. The Paramedic Method also helps you activate your sentences by eliminating passive voice and redundancies. The Paramedic Method is

an easy to learn, systematic way to make your sentences more persuasive and more user-centered.

Follow the seven steps below to improve the readability of your sentences.

### The Paramedic Method

1. Circle the prepositions (of, in, about, for, onto, into)
2. Draw a box around the "is" verb forms
3. Ask, "Where's the action?"
4. Change the "action" into a simple verb
5. Move the doer into the subject (Who's kicking whom)
6. Eliminate any unnecessary slow wind-ups
7. Eliminate any redundancies.

in this paragraph is a demonstration of the use of good style in the writing of a report.  
Action in sentence; eliminate slow wind-ups

*Revision*  
This paragraph demonstrates good style in reports (or) ...good style in report writing.  
The doer is in the subject

## Now You Try

*Use the Paramedic Method in the sentences below to practice.*

Use the Paramedic Method in the sentences below to practice making your sentences more concise. After you use the Paramedic Method on these sentences, check your results against the sentences at the bottom of this handout.

1. The point I wish to make is that the employees working at this company are in need of a much better manager of their money.
2. It is widely known that the engineers at Sandia Labs have become active participants in the Search and Rescue operations in most years.
3. After reviewing the results of your previous research, and in light of the relevant information found within the context of the study, there is ample evidence for making important, significant changes to our operating procedures.

Example Concise Solutions:

1. Employees at this company need a better money manager. (Original word count: 26. New word count: 10).
2. In recent years, engineers at Sandia Labs have participated in the Search and Rescue operations. (Original word count: 24. New word count: 16).
3. After reviewing the results of your research, and within the context of the study, we find evidence supporting significant changes in our operating procedures. (Original word count: 36. New word count: 25).

## Proofreading

After completing the revision and editing stages of the process, proofread your paper to catch any remaining grammar, mechanical, or “typo” issues (refer to our Proofreading Handout for tips).

*This handout adapted from a larger piece by Richard Johnson-Sheehan and Richard Lanham.*

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