

# revision

*Revision is a critical part of writing. This handout will help you make the most of the revision process.*

## Revision, Editing, and Proofreading

People often use the terms “revision,” “editing,” and “proofreading” interchangeably, but they have specific meanings worth delineating.

### Revision

When you revise, you focus on the “big picture” of your paper. This process includes scrutinizing the argument your paper is trying to make and making sure that your overall organization leads to your intended conclusion.

### Editing

When you edit, you improve your text at the sentence level. To do this, try reading the draft out loud. Edit with your audience in mind: refine your sentences until they are clear, concise, and cohesive. Pay special attention to issues with voice, verb tense, pronoun reference, and parallelism.

*Note:* For more information on editing, please see our [handout](#) on this topic.

### Proofreading

When you proofread, you look for errors with grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This is best done on a hard copy of the manuscript. As with editing, you will probably want to read the text out loud. You might even want to consider reading the text backwards, which helps defamiliarize it in your mind and makes typographical errors easier to catch.

*Note:* For more information on proofreading, please see our [handout](#) on this topic.

## Preparation

It is best to begin writing with the revision process in mind. The most important thing you can do is start early. The more you write initially, the more you have to work with when you revise.

## General Advice

Remember the “Four R’s”: **rethinking** your thesis, **reviewing** your evidence, **refining** your organization and language, and **reading** your paper out loud.



# Rhetorical Concerns

Rhetorically speaking, an act of communication consists of three basic parts: the speaker, the audience, and the issue. Together, these elements are called the rhetorical triangle or rhetorical situation. As you revise, consider how each element is working in your text.

## Speaker (Writer)

Every time you speak or write, you create an image of yourself in the mind of your audience. Even in scientific papers, small choices like formatting and vocabulary create an impression of your abilities, values, and intelligence.

As you revise, ask yourself the following questions:

- Who am I in relation to my audience?
- How am I portraying myself?
- Which attributes am I emphasizing?
- Are my vocabulary, tone, and diction appropriate for this piece?

## Audience

Understanding your audience is essential for successful writing. Even if you have a compelling argument, alienating your audience with an unpleasant or casual tone will cause your work to fail.

As you revise, ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is the audience?
- What values does the audience have?
- Why does/should the audience care about the issue?
- What does my audience already believe about the issue?
- Why might my audience find my argument unacceptable or unbelievable?

## Issue

Your issue or topic is not the same thing as your argument. When you argue, you make a claim about an issue.

**Issue:** vaccinating children

**Argument:** Vaccinating children does not lead to autism.

As you revise, ask yourself the following questions about your issue:

- What is my issue?
- What has already been said about this issue?
- How have I situated my argument within the context of the conversation about this issue?
- Why is this issue timely?

*Note:* For more practice determining how each element of the rhetorical situation is working in your text, please see the worksheets at the end of this handout.

You also might want to consider the **stasis** of your issue. Stasis refers to where both you and your audience

stand on your issue. It is a way to make sure you are both on the same page and to avoid arguing past one another.

*Note:* For a detailed explanation of stasis, please see our “Brainstorming: Invention” [handout](#).

## Argument

Your argument is the reason your paper exists. As you revise your argument, consider the following questions:

- What are the reasons supporting my argument?
- What is the evidence supporting my reasons?
- Is my evidence sufficient?
- Is my evidence typical?
- Is my evidence relevant?
- Who would disagree with my argument, reasons, or evidence?
- What are any opposing views and how credible are they?

## Organization

### Introduction

The introduction is where you set expectations with your readers: you help them anticipate what they will be able to learn or get out of your piece. Depending on the type of paper you are writing, this will most likely be the place where you will state your thesis—your central argument about the issue.

When revising your introduction, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my thesis clear?
- What is the context for my argument?
- Why is my argument timely?
- Have I demonstrated to my audience that it is timely?
- Does my introduction suggest the structure of the rest of the piece?

*Note:* For more information on writing an introduction, please see our “Introductions” [handout](#).

### Discipline-specific Sections

Depending on the type of paper you are writing and the discipline you are working within, the body of your paper may contain different sections, such as a “Materials and Methods” or “Results” section.

For a “**Materials and Methods**” section, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are all of my materials and methods listed?
- Have I included enough information for other researchers to replicate or evaluate my work?
- Have I made judicious use of active and passive voice in this section?

*Note:* For more information on writing a “Materials and Methods” section, please see our [handout](#) on this topic.

For a **“Results”** section, ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I included all of my major findings?
- How have I arranged my findings?
- Have I emphasized important data in my text as well as in my tables and figures?

*Note:* For more information on writing a “Results” section, please see our [handout](#) on this topic.

Consult the rubric for your assignment or your professor for additional expectations for these particular sections.

## Discussion or Conclusion

Beginning writers often think that the conclusion is simply a place to restate what you have said throughout the paper. While reiteration is important, a conclusion is much more than a summary.

When revising your conclusion, ask yourself the following questions:

- So what? Why is my argument significant in the larger context of the issue?
- What now? What further action does my argument suggest?

*Note:* For more information on writing a “Discussion” section, please see our [handout](#) on this topic.

## Paragraphs

More than a unit of length, a paragraph is a unit of thought. Organize your paragraphs around ideas and claims. Too many ideas can clog a paragraph and leave your reader without a clear sense of focus, so you will probably want to limit the number of ideas or concepts in a paragraph.

When revising your paragraphs, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the purpose or idea of this paragraph?
- Have I already talked about this idea somewhere else, and would the information of this paragraph make more sense there?
- What do I need this paragraph to do?
- How does this paragraph relate to my previous and subsequent paragraphs?
- How does this paragraph relate to my overall claim, argument, or purpose?

*Note:* For more information on paragraph structure, please see our “Paragraphs” [handout](#).

## Transitions

A transition marks the passage of one subject or development to another. In academic writing, transitions establish logical connections between sentences, paragraphs and sections of your paper, demonstrating how they collectively bring your ideas together into a coherent argument.

When developing a transitional phrase or sentence, ask yourself:

- How do I want this first (or last) sentence to relate to its neighboring paragraph?
- How can I make it relevant to my main ideas?

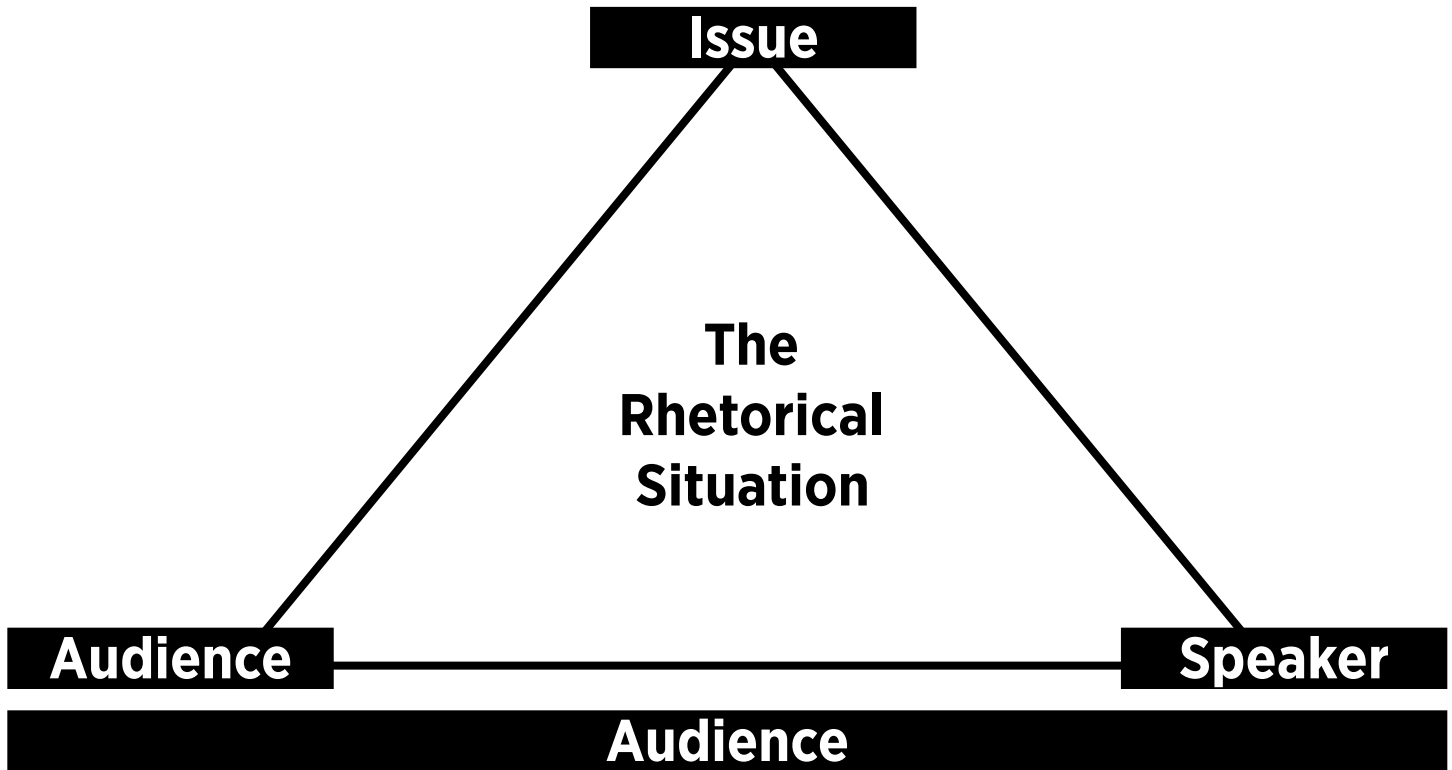
One way to do this is to select key phrases from the previous paragraph and reiterate them in the next. You can also use transitional words or phrases such as “however,” “in addition,” “finally,” “similarly,”



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“in fact,” and “as a result,” to help your writing flow smoothly and to help readers see the relationship between your ideas as expressed in different paragraphs. Be careful to not overuse these terms—overuse can actually weaken your paper.

*Note:* For more information on and ideas for effective transitions, please see our [handout](#) on this topic.



Who is my audience? \_\_\_\_\_

What does my audience want? \_\_\_\_\_

What questions does the audience want answered? \_\_\_\_\_

What does my audience value? \_\_\_\_\_

Why does my audience care about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_

What does my audience know about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_

What doesn't my audience know about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_

What does my audience accept as evidence? \_\_\_\_\_

What doesn't my audience accept as evidence? \_\_\_\_\_

What does my audience know about me? \_\_\_\_\_

What does my audience expect from me? \_\_\_\_\_

## Speaker

- Who am I in relation to my audience? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do I want to accomplish? \_\_\_\_\_
- How can I establish credibility? \_\_\_\_\_
- Why do I care about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do I know about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_
- What don't I know about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do I accept as evidence? \_\_\_\_\_
- What don't I accept as evidence? \_\_\_\_\_
- Which attributes do I need to emphasize? \_\_\_\_\_
- What information about myself do I need to share? \_\_\_\_\_
- What sort of vocabulary should I use? \_\_\_\_\_
- What sort of tone should I use? \_\_\_\_\_

## Issue

- What is my issue? \_\_\_\_\_
- What has already been said about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_
- Why is my issue timely? \_\_\_\_\_
- What question am I asking about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is my claim about the issue? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are the reasons that support my claim?
- \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- What evidence supports my reasons?
- \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

What is the logic linking my claim and reasons? \_\_\_\_\_

How is my evidence sufficient? \_\_\_\_\_

How is my evidence typical? \_\_\_\_\_

How is my evidence relevant? \_\_\_\_\_

Who would disagree with my claim, reasons, evidence, or assumptions? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the opposing views to my claim? \_\_\_\_\_