

Editing your Final Paper in Five Steps

You may be tempted to think you are finished with your paper after you have done your basic edit on the first draft, but revisions will always be needed for improvement. While getting feedback from others is useful, learning to edit your writing yourself is a critical part of becoming a good writer.

Many writers find it difficult to identify what to revise in their own writing. Following these five steps can help take the mystery out of self-editing.

1) Check the assignment instructions.

- Compare the instructions to your draft. Use the instructions like a checklist.
- Make a note of any elements missing from your paper, and focus your revisions on those areas.

2) Check the thesis.

- Is it the right type of thesis for the kind of paper you are writing?
- Can it be more specific?
- Does it match the conclusions you draw in the body of the paper?
- Does it explain the significance of your argument?

3) Check the body paragraphs.

- Is the topic sentence easy to identify?
- Is there evidence to support your claims?
- Is it clear how the evidence supports the claims?
- Have you explained/discussed the evidence thoroughly?
- Does the conclusion tie the paragraph's ideas back to the topic sentence and the thesis?
- Is there a smooth transition to the next paragraph?

4) Check the introduction and conclusion.

- Does the intro introduce the topic and engage the reader?
- Does the conclusion do more than repeat what you already said?
- Does the conclusion elaborate on the significance of the thesis?

5) Proofread the paper. Do this several times.

- Make major revisions first. Do your ideas come across clearly?
- Then check for grammar mistakes, awkward sentences, repetition, citations, style, and formatting.

Remember that your self-editing is a key part of the writing process. It's also a skill that takes time to develop. The best thing about practicing self-editing is that the process of finding and revising weak areas of our writing gives us a better understanding of our strengths and weaknesses. It also reminds us what a well-developed paper looks like. All of this helps us write stronger papers in the future.

More Editing Resources

Self-Editing your Grammar: http://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Learning%20Centres/Edit_BasicEssay_LA.pdf

University of North Carolina: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/editing-and-proofreading/>

Purdue's OWL (Online Writing Lab): <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/01/>

Douglas College: http://www.douglas.bc.ca/shared/assets/WR_277395.pdf