Secrets to Successful Papers: Revising and Proofreading

Monday, April 6th @ 7 pm ET
Presenter – Kyle Harley
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Please click here to view this recorded workshop:
http://khe2.adobeconnect.com/p5uz07oj1j6/
In today’s workshop we will be covering the differences and similarities between two of writing’s most important practices: revising and proofreading. By separating the terms and understanding them on a base level, additional exercises will also aid in helping better the aforementioned processes. Most importantly, establishing a general plan for your overall process may well be helpful, as well, to better assess where both revision and proofreading can fit into your pre-existing regimen.
Many writers often struggle with differentiating revising and proofreading. In fact, some writers feel that it only remains necessary to proofread their paper for common errors: misspellings, punctuation mistakes, typos, etc. Interestingly enough, the acts of revising and proofreading contribute to the overall process of finishing both the draft and the paper in the long run. This being said, how are we to define the two terms in order to clarify which practice is to be used and when?
Simply put, proofreading and revising rarely, if ever, act alone! Revising is the act of making either a significant or minor change to your paper. Revising requires:

- Viewing the text from multiple perspectives
- Objectivity
- Openness
- Reflection

Separating and Uniting the Terms
Revision Considerations:

- Is my position clear throughout my paper?
- Are my sources being effectively used to both support my claims and contribute to my argument?
- Did I write properly for my intended audience?
- What areas feel weak and in need of more substance?
- How are my transitions throughout the paper?
- Does each portion of the paper feel “in place?”
- What needs to be clarified more for my readers?
- Is this the position I wanted to take on this issue?
- What else can be said without rambling?
- Did I accomplish the assignment?

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Tips for Revising

- Ask a friend or relative to read your paper! Feedback from someone outside of the assignment really helps when revising.

- Revise multiple times over the course of a few days. Each day new ideas will pop into your head and possibly change the paper—plus, you deserve the break!

- Do not over-complicate revising. If it helps to look at your paper in sections, revise each section and then revise the paper as a whole.

- Step out of your comfort zone and try something new: The Post-Draft Outline

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There is no right or wrong way to revise—it is never how you do revise, it is that you revise.
Our first technique of the day is known as a post-draft outline, and, as you will see, this tends to fall a bit more under revision than proofreading, but both can easily be accomplished simultaneously as we will discuss later.

Simply put, a post-draft outline is an outline that is constructed after the completion of a draft. The process involves making a very simple list of the main ideas of each paragraph. You may start at the very end of the draft, which I suggest, because then you are looking at the subject matter of the paragraph alone and not the entirety of the piece itself. Yes, I am telling you to read your papers backward, but give it a try! I promise it will work for this exercise.

Once you establish what the base of the paragraph is, do your best to be as detailed about the paragraph as you can in one-to-two sentences. Listed on the slide is a sample of what one of your paragraph summaries might look like.

It is important to review the paper AS IT IS. This isn’t a time to try and convince yourself that your writing doesn’t need improvement. Be objective; your grade will thank you.
For more information on post-draft outlines, we have a fantastic workshop recorded on this practice alone that you will be able to take advantage of after this workshop concludes.
Proofreading can be best defined as cleaning up your work. When you are proofreading, you are essentially finding all of the minor errors throughout your paper that you may well have missed as you wrote.

We all glaze over some of our smaller mistakes; we’re human after all. This should not discourage you from getting your ideas on the page. My first drafts in college used to look like a Nightmare on Elm Street before I learned how to proofread like a professional. It’s best to search for minor errors at your own discretion; do you like to tidy as you go or are you the type who can wait until the end of a draft before right clicking any of those squiggly red lines? Either way, be sure you are polishing up your work, and the following activity will certainly assist you in this area.
Power Reading!

• Reading a draft out loud allows for a great deal of both revision AND proofreading.
• What you will experience:
  - Stumbling—and that’s okay!
  - Disjointed thoughts
  - Misspellings, confused words (there/their/they’re), grammar issues, etc.
  - Jumpy flow throughout the paragraph/draft
  - Repetition/redundancies
  - Patterns of language
    - As stated previously,
    - For example,
    - As stated by,

I like to call this strategy Power Reading mainly due to the fact that once you complete this style of reading, it’s quite difficult to go back to any other style of proofreading.

As simple as it sounds, reading your paper out loud to yourself works absolute wonders for picking up on minor mistakes and grammatical issues throughout the draft. This practice sounds simple at best, but I guarantee your writing will improve due to the following reasons:

You’re going to stumble, and that’s okay! If you stumble on the phrasing of something that you wrote, your readers will, too, so these areas will need a bit of modification to help your audience along.

Sometimes our thoughts, like our phrasing, become a bit disjointed, and this jump in logic, from point A to point K, for instance, will be clearly evident, nearly as evident as the misspelled and confused words. You will also pick up on instances of repetition and other areas that may be a bit redundant and not contributory to the overall draft. Consistent patterns of language, much like repetition in general, will also jump off the page as you’ll be repeating the same phrases to yourself over and over again.
Many students wonder which order they should use: proofreading and then revising or revising and then proofreading? To be honest, the choice is up to you. Personally, I cannot begin to work on revising my paper until all of the minor mistakes are fixed. So my process looks a bit like this:

Prewrite $\rightarrow$ Revise $\rightarrow$ Reconstruct $\rightarrow$ Revise $\rightarrow$ Proofread $\rightarrow$ 1-2 Day break $\rightarrow$ Final Proofread

Never think that you need to follow a pattern for proofreading and revising but always remember to do both!

Once you establish your pattern, see where you can insert both proofreading and revising as you see fit!
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