

Techniques for Revising & Editing

1. **Read out loud.** You're more likely to hear problems in clarity and logic if you read your text out loud.
2. **"Omit needless words."** As Strunk and White advise, make every word count. Not only will your document be more concise, but your tone will seem more decisive.
3. **Rely primarily on nouns and verbs.** As a rule, nouns and verbs carry more weight than adjectives and adverbs. Compare, for example, "This is an extremely serious problem" to "This is a crisis."
4. **Place important words at the ends of your sentences.** Trim your endings and rearrange your order to make use of a sentence's natural stress.
5. **Check for variety in sentence structure and length.** Variety enlivens your style.
6. **Make a topic sentence outline.** An outline of the sentences that introduce your paragraphs may reveal problems in organization and logic.
7. **Check for transitional words and expressions.** Use words such as "nevertheless" and phrases such as "despite these problems" to link your thought between sentences and paragraphs.
8. **Review the document's visual design.** Be sure that your major points are effectively highlighted and easily referenced.
9. **Locate your purpose statement.** Generally this should come in the opening sentence or paragraph.
10. **Check the closing argument or action statement.** Be sure that your argument is effectively restated and that your action statement is clearly presented.
11. **Proofread the entire document.** Make two or more passes through your document, concentrating first on content to ensure coherent development and last on mechanics to eliminate distracting errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and format.
12. **Set your draft aside.** After your draft has gone cold, reread it from the reader's perspective.
13. **Ask a colleague to respond to your draft.** Why leave an important document to chance? Try it out on a test reader. Invite questions and criticisms.
14. **Review your writing six months later.** The passage of time enables you to hear your voice more clearly, to focus on both positive and negative traits of your style, and to develop whatever makes your writing unique and distinctive.