

Revising Overall Meaning, Structure, and Paragraph Development



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By now, you've probably abandoned any preconceptions you might have had about good writers sitting down and creating a finished product in one easy step. Alexander Pope's comment that "true ease in writing comes from art, not chance" is as true today as it was more than two hundred years ago. Writing that seems effortlessly clear is often the result of sustained work, not of good luck or even inborn talent. And much of this work takes place during the final stage of the writing process, when ideas, paragraphs, sentences, and words are refined and reshaped.

You've most likely seen cartoons picturing writers plugging away at their typewriters, filling their wastebaskets with sheet after sheet of crumpled paper. It's true. Professional writers—novelists, journalists, textbook authors—seldom submit a piece of writing that hasn't been revised. They recognize that rough, unpolished work doesn't do them justice. What's more, they often look forward to revising. Columnist Ellen Goodman puts it this way: "What makes me happy

is rewriting. . . . It's like cleaning house, getting rid of all the junk, getting things in the right order, tightening up."

In a sense, revision occurs throughout the writing process: At some earlier stage, you may have dropped an idea, overhauled your thesis, or shifted paragraph order. What, then, is different about the rewriting that occurs in the revision stage? The answer has to do with the literal meaning of the word *revision*—reseeing, or seeing again. Genuine revision involves casting clear eyes on your work, viewing it as though you're a reader rather than the writer. Revision is not, as some believe, simply touch-up work—changing a sentence here, a word there, eliminating spelling errors, typing a neat final copy. Revision means that you go through your paper looking for trouble, ready to pick a fight with your own writing. And then you must be willing to sit down and make the changes needed for your writing to be as effective as possible.

Throughout this book, we emphasize that everyone approaches early stages in the writing process differently. The same is true for the revision stage. Some people dash off a draft, knowing they'll spend hours reworking it later. Others find that writing the first draft slowly yields such good results that wholesale revision isn't necessary. Some writers revise neatly, while others fill their drafts with messily scribbled changes. Then there are those who find that the more they revise, the more they overcomplicate their writing and rob it of spontaneity. So, for each writer and for each piece of writing, the amount and kind of revision will vary.

Because revision is hard work, you may resist it. After putting the final period in your first draft, you may feel done and have trouble accepting that more work remains. Or, as you read the draft, you may see so many weak spots that you view revision as punishment for not getting things right the first time. And, if you feel shaky about how to proceed, you may be tempted to skip revising altogether.

If all this sounds as though we're talking about you, don't give up. Here are five strategies to help you get going if you balk at or feel overwhelmed by revising.

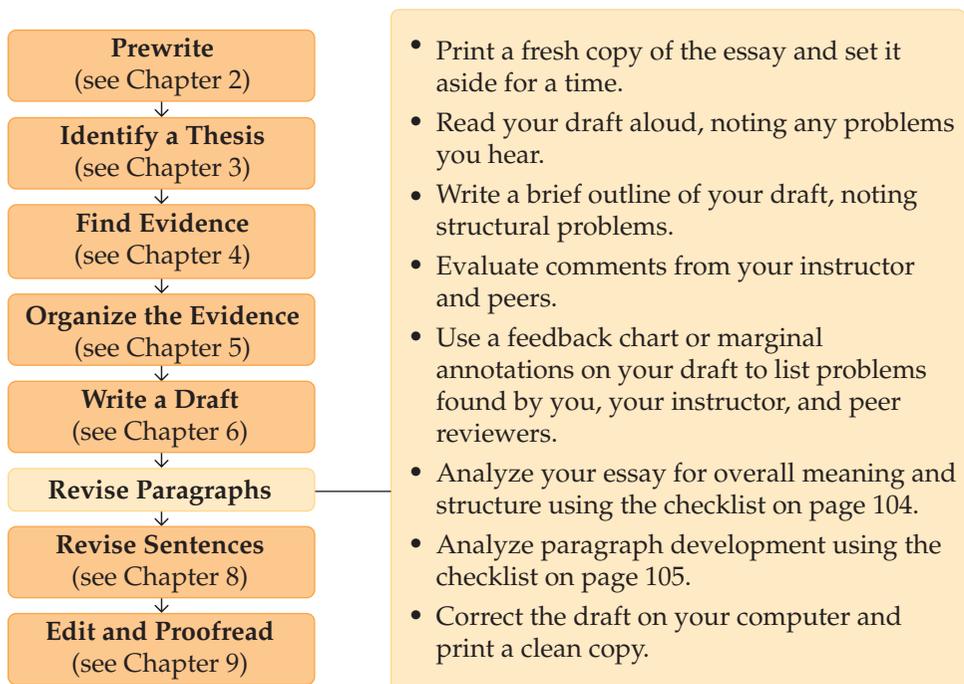
FIVE STRATEGIES TO MAKE REVISION EASIER

Keep in mind that the revision strategies discussed here should be adapted to each writing situation. Revising an answer on an essay exam is quite different from revising a paper you've spent several weeks preparing. Other considerations include your professor's requirements and expectations, the time available, and the paper's bearing on your grade. In any case, the following strategies will help you approach revision more confidently. (See Figure 7.1 on page 97.)

Set Your First Draft Aside for a While

When you pick up your draft after having set it aside for a time, you'll approach it with a fresh, more objective point of view. How much of an interval to leave depends on the time available to you. In general, though, the more time between finishing the draft and starting to revise, the better.

FIGURE 7.1
Process Diagram: Revising Paragraphs



Work from Printed Text

Working with an essay in impersonal printed form, instead of in your own familiar handwriting, helps you see the paper impartially, as if someone else had written it. Each time you make major changes, try to retype your essay so that you can see it anew. Using a word processor makes it easy to prepare successive copies. If, however, you work from handwritten drafts, don't boldly strike out or erase as you revise. Instead, lightly cross out material, in case you want to retrieve it later on.

Read the Draft Aloud

Hearing how your writing sounds helps you pick up problems that might otherwise go undetected: places where sentences are awkward, meaning is ambiguous, words are imprecise. Even better, have another person read your draft aloud to you. The thought of this probably makes you shudder, but it's worth the risk. Someone else doesn't have—as you do—a vested interest in making your writing sound good. If a reader slows to a crawl over a murky paragraph or trips over a convoluted sentence, you know where you have to do some rewriting.

View Revision as a Series of Steps

Like many students, you may find the prospect of revising your draft to be a daunting one. You can overcome a bad case of revision jitters simply by viewing revision as a process. Instead of trying to tackle all of a draft's problems at once, proceed step by step. (The feedback chart and annotation system discussed on pages 102–103 will help you do just that.) If time allows, read your essay several times. Move from a broad overview (the *macro* level) to an up-close look at mechanics (the *micro* level). With each reading, focus on different issues and ask different questions about the draft.

Here is a recommended series of revision steps:

First step: Revise overall meaning and structure.

Second step: Revise paragraph development.

Third step: Revise sentences and words.

At first, the prospect of reading and rewriting a paper several times may seem to make revision more, not less, overwhelming. Eventually, though, you'll become accustomed to revision as a process, and you'll appreciate the way such an approach improves your writing.

Ernest Hemingway once told an interviewer that he had revised the last page of one of his novels thirty-nine times. When the interviewer asked, "What was it that had you stumped?", Hemingway answered, "Getting the words right." We don't expect you to revise your paper thirty-nine times. Whenever possible, though, you should aim for three readings. Resist the impulse to tinker with, say, an unclear sentence until you're sure the essay as a whole makes its point clearly. After all, it can be difficult to rephrase a muddy sentence until you have the essay's overall meaning well in hand.

Remember, though: There are no hard-and-fast rules about the revision steps. For one thing, there are bound to be occasions when you have time for, at best, only one quick pass over a draft. Moreover, as you gain experience revising, you'll probably streamline the process or shift the steps around. Assume, for example, that you get bogged down trying to recast the thesis so it more accurately reflects the draft's overall meaning (the first step). You might take a break by fastforwarding to the final stage and using the dictionary to check the spelling of several words. Or, while reorganizing a paragraph (the second step), you might realize you need to rephrase some sentences (the third step).

Evaluate and Respond to Instructor Feedback

Often, instructors collect and respond to students' first drafts. Like many students, you may be tempted to look only briefly at your instructor's comments. Perhaps you've "had it" with the essay and don't want to think about revising it to reflect the instructor's remarks. But taking your instructor's comments into account when revising is often what's needed to turn a shaky first draft into a strong final draft.

When an instructor returns a final draft graded, you may think that the grade is all that counts. Remember, though: Grades are important, but comments are even more so. They can help you *improve* your writing—if not in this paper, then in the next one. If you're reading or listening to your instructor's feedback, pay close attention and take notes. Then use a modified version of the feedback chart or a system of marginal annotations (see pages 102–103) to help you evaluate and react to the instructor's comments. If you don't understand or don't agree with the instructor's observations, you shouldn't hesitate to request a conference. Be sure to go to the conference prepared. You might, for example, put a check next to the instructor's comments you want to discuss. Your instructor will appreciate your thoughtful planning; getting together gives both you and the instructor a chance to clarify your respective points of view.

Peer Review: An Additional Revision Strategy

Many instructors include in-class or at-home peer review as a regular part of a composition course. Peer review—the critical reading of another person's writing with the intention of suggesting constructive changes—accomplishes several important goals. First, peer review helps you gain a more objective perspective on your work. When you write something, you're often too close to what you've prepared to evaluate it fairly; you may have trouble seeing where the writing is strong and where it needs to be strengthened. Peer review supplies the fresh, neutral perspective you need. Second, reviewing your classmates' work broadens your own composing options. You may be inspired to experiment with a technique you admired in a classmate's writing but wouldn't have thought of on your own. Finally, peer review trains you to be a better reader and critic of your *own* writing. When you get into the habit of critically reading other students' writing, you become more adept at critiquing your own.

The revision checklists on pages 104, 105, 124, and 134–135 of this book will help focus your revision—whether you're reworking your own paper or responding to a peer's. Your instructor may have you respond to all questions on the checklist or to several selected items. What follows is a peer review worksheet that Harriet Davids's instructor prepared to help students respond to first drafts based on the assignment on page 11. Wanting students to focus on four areas (thesis statement, support for thesis statement, overall organization, and signal devices), the instructor drew upon relevant sections from the revision checklists. With this customized worksheet in hand, Harriet's classmate Frank Tejada was able to give Harriet constructive feedback on her first draft (see page 100). (*Note:* Because Harriet didn't want to influence Frank's reaction, the draft she gave him didn't include her marginal notations to herself.)

As the peer review worksheet shows, Frank flagged several areas that Harriet herself also noted needed work. (Turn to pages 86–87 to see Harriet's marginal comments on her draft.) But he also commented on entirely new areas (for example, the sequence problem in paragraph 4), offering Harriet a fresh perspective on what she needed to do to polish her draft. To see which of Frank's suggestions



Peer Review Worksheet

Essay Author's Name: *Harriet Davids* Reviewer's Name: *Frank Tejada*

1. What is the essay's thesis? Is it explicit or implied? Does the thesis focus on a limited subject and express the writer's attitude toward that subject?

Thesis: "Being a parent today is much more difficult [than it used to be]." The thesis is limited and expresses a clear attitude. But the sentence the thesis appears in (last sentence of para. 1) is too long because it also contains the plan of development. Maybe put thesis and plan of development in separate sentences.

2. What are the main points supporting the thesis? List the points. Is each supporting point developed sufficiently? If not, where is more support needed?

- (1) Parents have to control kids' distractions from school.
(2) Parents have to help kids develop responsible sexual values despite sex being everywhere.
(3) Parents have to protect kids from life-threatening dangers.*

The supporting points are good and are explained pretty well, except for a few places. The "Unfortunately" sentence in para. 2 is irrelevant. Also, in para. 2, you use the example of your girls, but never again. Either include them throughout or not at all. In para. 3, the final sentence about the government guidelines opens a whole new topic; maybe steer away from this. The items in para. 4 seem vague and need specific examples. In the conclusion, omit Holden Caulfield; since he was from an earlier generation, this example undermines your thesis about parenting today.

3. What overall format (chronological, spatial, emphatic, simple-to-complex) is used to sequence the essay's main points? Does this format work? Why or why not? What organizational format is used in each supporting paragraph? Does the format work? Why or why not?

The paper's overall emphatic organization seems good. Emphatic order also works in para. 3, and spatial order works well in para. 2. But the sentences in para. 4 need rearranging. Right now, the examples are in mixed-up chronological order, making it hard to follow. Maybe you should reorder the examples from young kids to older kids.

4. What signal devices are used to connect ideas within and between paragraphs? Are there too few signal devices or too many? Where?

The topic sentence of para. 3 needs to be a stronger bridging sentence. Also, too many "and's" in para. 3. Try "in addition" or "another" in some places. I like the "worst of all" transition to para. 4.

Harriet followed, take a look at her feedback chart on page 102, at her final draft on pages 144–145, and at the “Commentary” following the essay.

Becoming a Skilled Peer Reviewer

Even with the help of a checklist, preparing a helpful peer review is a skill that takes time to develop. At first, you, like many students, may be too easy or too critical. Effective peer review calls for rigor and care; you should give classmates the conscientious feedback that you hope for in return. Peer review also requires tact and kindness; feedback should always be constructive and include observations about what works well in a piece of writing. People have difficulty mustering the energy to revise if they feel there’s nothing worth revising.



If your instructor doesn’t include peer review, you can set up peer review sessions outside of class, with classmates getting together to respond to each other’s drafts. Or you may select non-classmates who are objective (not a love-struck admirer or a doting grandparent) and skilled enough to provide useful commentary.

To focus your readers’ comments, you may adapt the revision checklists that appear throughout this book, or you may develop your own questions. If you prepare the questions yourself, be sure to solicit *specific* observations about what does and doesn’t work in your writing. If you simply ask, “How’s this?” you may receive a vague comment like “It’s not very effective.” What you want are concrete observations and suggestions: “I’m confused because what you say in the fifth sentence contradicts what you say in the second.” To promote such specific responses, ask your readers targeted (preferably written) questions like, “I’m having trouble moving from my second to my third point. How can I make the transition smoother?” Such questions require more than “yes” or “no” responses; they encourage readers to dig into your writing where you sense it needs work. (If it’s feasible, encourage readers to *write* their responses to your questions.)

If you and your peer reviewer(s) can’t meet in person, **e-mail** can provide a crucial means of contact. With a couple of clicks, you can simply send each other computer files of your work. Before you do so, determine whether your word-processing software is compatible; if so, you’ll be able to send each other your computerized drafts as file attachments. If not, you can copy the text of your paper and paste it into the e-mail message box. (You’ll likely lose the paper’s format features, but the content is what matters most during peer review.) You and your reviewer(s) also need to decide exactly how to exchange comments about your drafts. You might conclude, for example, that you’ll use MS Word’s “Track Changes” feature or type your responses, perhaps in bold capitals, into the file itself. Or you might decide to print out the drafts and reply to the comments in writing, later exchanging the annotated drafts in person. No matter what you and your peer(s) decide, you’ll probably find e-mail an invaluable tool in the writing process.

Evaluate and Respond to Peer Review

Accepting criticism isn’t easy (even if you asked for it), and not all peer reviewers will be tactful. Even so, try to listen with an open mind to those giving you

feedback. Take notes on their oral observations and/or have them fill out the checklist described above. Later, when you're ready to revise your paper, reread your notes. Which reviewer remarks seem valid? Which recommendations are workable? Which are not? In addition, try using a feedback chart or a system of marginal annotations to help you evaluate and remedy any perceived weaknesses in your draft.

Here's how to use a three-column **feedback chart**. In the first column, list the major problems you and your readers see in the draft. Next, rank the problems, designating the most critical as "1." Then in the second column, jot down possible solutions—your own as well as your readers'. Finally, in the third column, briefly describe what action you'll take to correct each problem. Here is the chart that Harriet Davids composed following Frank Tejada's review of her first draft (the draft appears on pages 86–87; the peer review worksheet appears on page 100):



<u>Problems</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>	<u>Decisions</u>
① Thesis is too long	Break into two sentences.	Break after "difficult" and add "than it was a generation ago."
④ Irrelevant "Unfortunately" sentence in para. 2	Make sentence relevant or delete.	Delete sentence.
③ Abandoned example of my girls after para. 2	Either include throughout or delete everywhere.	Omit references to my girls.
② In para. 3, final sentence opens new topic	Steer away from new topic.	Delete sentence.
⑥ Vague items in para. 4	Give more specific examples.	Provide more specifics on violence against children and peer pressure.
⑤ Sentences in para. 4 need rearranging	Reorder examples from young kids to older kids.	Begin with small kids, then older kids, then teens.
⑦ Weak transitions in para. 3	Strengthen topic sentence; replace "and"s with other transitions.	Create stronger bridging sentence for para. 3. Substitute other transitions for "and"s.

Whether or not you decide to use a feedback chart, be sure to enter **marginal annotations** on your draft (preferably a clean copy of it) before revising it. In the margins, jot down any major problems, numbered in order of importance, along with possible remedies. Marking your paper this way, much as an instructor might, helps you view your paper as though it were written by someone else. (To see how such marginal annotations work, turn to page 106 or look at the sample first drafts of student essays in Chapters 10–18.) Then, keeping the draft’s problems in mind, start revising.

If you’ve been working on a computer, type in your changes, or handwrite changes directly on the draft above the appropriate line. (Rework extensive sections on a separate sheet of paper.) When revising, always keep in mind that you may not agree with every reviewer suggestion. That’s fine. It’s *your* paper, and it’s *your* decision to implement or reject the suggestions made by your peers.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the first and second steps in the revision process—revising overall meaning and structure and paragraph development. Chapter 8 focuses on the third step—revising sentences and words.

REVISING OVERALL MEANING AND STRUCTURE

During this first step in the revision process, you (and any readers you may have) should read the draft quickly to assess its *general effect* and *clarity*. Does the draft accomplish what you set out to do? Does it develop a central point clearly and logically? Does it merit and hold the reader’s attention?

It’s not uncommon when revising at this stage to find that the draft doesn’t fully convey what you had in mind. Perhaps your intended thesis ends up being overshadowed by another idea. (If that happens, you have two options: (1) you may pursue the new line of thought as your revised thesis, or (2) you may bring the paper back into line with your original thesis by deleting extraneous material.) Another problem might be that readers miss a key point. Perhaps you initially believed the point could be implied, but you now realize it needs to be stated explicitly.

Preparing a *brief outline* of a draft can help evaluate the essay’s overall structure. Either you or a reader can prepare the outline. In either case, your thesis, reflecting any changes made during the first draft, should be written at the top of the outline page. Then you or your readers jot down in brief outline form the paper’s basic structure. With the draft pared down to its essentials, you can see more easily how parts contribute to the whole and how points do or do not fit together. This bare-bones rendering often reveals the changes needed to remedy any fuzziness or illogic in the development of the draft’s central idea and key supporting points.

The following checklist is designed to help you and your readers evaluate a draft’s overall meaning and structure. As with other checklists in the book, you may either use all the checklist questions or focus only on those especially relevant to a particular essay. (Activities at the end of the chapter will refer you to this checklist when you revise several essays.) To see how one student used the checklist when revising, turn to page 106.



REVISING OVERALL MEANING AND STRUCTURE: A CHECKLIST

- What is your initial reaction to the draft? What do you like and dislike?
- What audience does the essay address? How suited to this audience are the essay's purpose, tone, and point of view?
- What is the essay's thesis? Is it explicit or implied? Does it focus on a limited subject and express the writer's attitude toward that subject? If not, what changes need to be made?
- What are the points supporting the thesis? List them. If any stray from or contradict the thesis, what changes need to be made?
- According to which organizing principle(s)—spatial, chronological, emphatic, simple to complex—are the main points arranged? Does this organizational scheme reinforce the thesis? Why or why not?
- Which patterns of development (narration, description, comparison-contrast, and so on) are used in the essay? How do these patterns reinforce the thesis?
- Where would background information, definition of terms, or additional material clarify meaning?

You are now ready to focus on the second step in the revising process.

REVISING PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

After you use feedback to refine the paper's fundamental meaning and structure, it's time to look closely at the essay's paragraphs. At this point, you and those giving you feedback should read the draft more slowly. How can the essay's paragraphs be made more unified (see pages 70–71) and more specific (pages 71–72)? Which paragraphs seem to lack sufficient support (pages 73–74)? Which would profit from more attention to coherence (pages 74–75)?

At this stage, you may find that a paragraph needs more examples to make its point or that a paragraph should be deleted because it doesn't develop the thesis. Or perhaps you realize that a paragraph should be placed earlier in the essay because it defines a term that readers need to understand from the outset.

Here's a strategy to help assess your paragraphs' effectiveness. In the margin next to each paragraph, make a brief notation that answers these two questions: (1) What is the paragraph's *purpose*? and (2) What is its *content*? Then skim the marginal notes to see if each paragraph does what you intended.

**REVISING PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT: A CHECKLIST**

- In what way does each supporting paragraph develop the essay's thesis? Which paragraphs fail to develop the thesis? Should they be deleted or revised?
- What is each paragraph's central idea? If this idea is expressed in a topic sentence, where is this sentence located? Where does something stray from or contradict the paragraph's main idea? How could the paragraph's focus be sharpened?
- Where in each paragraph does support seem irrelevant, vague, insufficient, inaccurate, nonrepresentative, or disorganized? What could be done to remedy these problems? Where would additional sensory details, examples, facts, statistics, expert authority, and personal observations be appropriate?
- By which organizational principle (spatial, chronological, or emphatic) are each paragraph's ideas arranged? Does this format reinforce the paragraph's main point? Why or why not?
- How could paragraph coherence be strengthened? Which signal devices are used to connect ideas within and between paragraphs? Where are there too few signals or too many?
- Where do too many paragraphs of the same length dull interest? Where would a short or a long paragraph be more effective?
- How could the introduction be strengthened? Which striking anecdote, fact, or statistic elsewhere in the essay might be moved to the introduction? How does the introduction establish the essay's purpose, audience, tone, and point of view? Which strategy links the introduction to the essay's body?
- How could the conclusion be strengthened? Which striking anecdote, fact, or statistic elsewhere in the essay might be moved to the conclusion? Would echoing something from the introduction help round off the essay more effectively? How has the conclusion been made an integral part of the essay?

During this stage, you should also examine the *length of your paragraphs*. Here's why.

You know how boring it can be to travel long stretches of unvarying highway. Without interesting twists and turns, sweeping views, and occasional rest stops, you struggle to stay awake. The same is true in writing. Paragraphs all the same length dull your readers' response, while variations encourage them to sit up and take notice. (We imagine, for example, that the two-sentence paragraph above got your attention.)

If your paragraphs tend to run long, try breaking some of them into shorter, crisper chunks. Be sure, however, not to break paragraphs just anywhere. To preserve

the paragraphs' logic, you may need to reshape and add material, always keeping in mind that each paragraph should have a clear and distinctive focus.

However, don't go overboard and break up all your paragraphs. Too many short paragraphs become as predictable as too many long ones. An abundance of brief paragraphs also makes it difficult for readers to see how points are related. (In such cases, you might combine short paragraphs containing similar ideas.) Furthermore, overreliance on short paragraphs may mean that you haven't provided sufficient evidence for your ideas. Finally, a succession of short paragraphs (as in a newspaper article) encourages readers to skim when, of course, you want them to consider carefully what you have to say. So use short paragraphs, but save them for places in the essay where you want to introduce variation or achieve emphasis.

The checklist on page 105 is designed to help you and your readers evaluate a draft's paragraph development. (Activities at the end of the chapter will refer you to the checklist when you revise several essays.) To see how a student used the checklist when revising, see below.

SAMPLE STUDENT REVISION OF OVERALL MEANING, STRUCTURE, AND PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT



The introduction to Harriet Davids's first draft that we saw in Chapter 6 (pages 86–87) is reprinted here with Harriet's revisions. In the margin, numbered in order of importance, are the problems with the introduction's meaning, structure, and paragraph development—as noted by Harriet's peer reviewer, Frank, and other classmates. (The group used the checklists on pages 104 and 105 to focus their critique.) The above-line changes show Harriet's first efforts to eliminate these problems through revision.

- ② Take out personal reference

In the '50s and '60s, parents had it easy. TV comedies of that period show the Raising children used to be much simpler in the 50s and 60s. I

- ③ Give specific TV shows

Cleavers scolding Beaver about his dirty hands remember TV images from that era showing that parenting involved and the Nelsons telling Ricky to clean his room. simply teaching kids to clean their rooms, do their homework,

- ① Thesis too long. Make plan of development separate sentence.

and _____ . But ^B being a parent today is much more difficult. because ^N nowadays parents have to shield/protect ^{must} their children ^{many} from lots of things ^{—from a growing number of} like distractions from schoolwork, from sexual ^{ly explicit} material, and from dangerous situations.

(If you'd like to see Harriet's final draft, turn to page 144.)

There's no doubt about it: As Harriet's reworked introduction shows, revision is challenging. But once you learn how to approach it step by step, you'll have the pleasure of seeing a draft become sharper and more focused. The rather global work you do early in the revision process puts you in a good position to concentrate on sentences and words—our focus in the following chapter.

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ACTIVITIES: REVISING OVERALL MEANING, STRUCTURE, AND PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT



An important note: When revising essay drafts in activities 1–3, don't worry too much about sentence structure and word choice. However, do save your revisions so you can focus on these matters after you read the next chapter.

1. Look at the marginal notes and above-line changes that Harriet Davids added to her first draft introduction on page 106. Now look at the draft's other paragraphs on pages 86–87 and identify problems in overall meaning, structure, and paragraph development. Working alone or in a group, start by asking questions like these: "Where does the essay stray from the thesis?" and "Where does a paragraph fail to present points in the most logical and compelling order?" (The critique you prepared for activity 9 in Chapter 6 should help.) For further guidance, refer to the checklists on pages 104 and 105. Summarize and rank the perceived problems in marginal annotations or on a feedback chart. Then type your changes or handwrite them between the lines of the draft (work on a newly typed copy, a photocopy, or the textbook pages themselves). Don't forget to save your revision.
2. Retrieve the draft you prepared in response to activity 12 in Chapter 6 (page 94). Outline the draft. Does your outline reveal any problems in the draft's overall meaning and structure? If it does, make whatever changes are needed. The checklists on pages 104 and 105 will help focus your revising efforts. (Save your revised draft so you can work with it further after reading the next chapter.)
3. Following is the first draft of an essay advocating a longer elementary school day. Read it closely. Are tone and point of view consistent throughout? Is the thesis clear? Is the support in each body paragraph relevant, specific, and adequate? Are ideas arranged in the most effective order? Working alone or in a group, use the checklists on pages 104 and 105 to identify problems with the draft's overall meaning, structure, and paragraph development. Summarize and rank the perceived problems on a feedback chart or in marginal annotations. Then revise the draft by typing a new version or by entering your changes by hand (on a photocopy of the draft, a typed copy, or the textbook pages themselves). Don't forget to save your revision.

The Extended School Day

Imagine a seven-year-old whose parents work until five each night. When she arrives home after school, she is on her own. She's a good girl, but still a lot of things could happen. She could get into trouble just by being curious. Or something could happen through no fault of her own. All over the country, there are many "latchkey" children like this little girl. Some way must be found to deal with the problem. One suggestion is to keep elementary schools open longer than they now are. There are many advantages to this idea.

Parents wouldn't have to be in a state of uneasiness about whether their child is safe and happy at home. They wouldn't get uptight about whether their child's needs are being met. They also wouldn't have to feel guilty because they are not able to help a child with homework. The longer day would make it possible for the teacher to provide such help. Extended school hours would also relieve families of the financial burden of hiring a home sitter. As my family learned, having a sitter can wipe out the budget. And having a sitter doesn't necessarily eliminate all problems. Parents still have the hassle of worrying whether the person will show up and be reliable.

It's a fact of life that many children dislike school, which is a sad commentary on the state of education in this country. Even so, the longer school day would benefit children as well. Obviously, the dangers of their being home alone after school would disappear because by the time the bus dropped them off after the longer school day, at least one parent would be home. The unnameable horrors feared by parents would not have a chance to happen. Instead, the children would be in school, under trained supervision. There, they would have a chance to work on subjects that give them trouble. In contrast, when my younger brother had difficulty with subtraction in second grade, he had to struggle along because there wasn't enough time to give him the help he needed. The longer day would also give children a chance to participate in extracurricular activities. They could join a science club, play on a softball team, sing in a school chorus, take an art class. Because school districts are trying to save money, they

often cut back on such extracurricular activities. They don't realize how important such experiences are.

Finally, the longer school day would also benefit teachers. Having more hours in each day would relieve them of a lot of pressure. This longer workday would obviously require schools to increase teachers' pay. The added salary would be an incentive for teachers to stay in the profession.

Implementing an extended school day would be expensive, but I feel that many communities would willingly finance its costs because it provides benefits to parents, children, and even teachers. Young children, home alone, wondering whether to watch another TV show or to wander outside to see what's happening, need this longer school day now.

4. Look closely at your instructor's comments on an ungraded draft of one of your essays. Using a feedback chart, summarize and evaluate your instructor's comments. That done, rework the essay. Type your new version, or make your changes by hand. In either case, save the revision so you can work with it further after reading the next chapter.
5. Return to the draft you wrote in response to activity 10 or activity 11 in Chapter 6 (page 93). To identify any problems, meet with several people and request that one of them read the draft aloud. Then ask your listeners focused questions about the areas you sense need work. Alternatively, you may use the checklists on pages 104 and 105 to focus the group's feedback. In either case, summarize and rank the comments on a feedback chart or in marginal annotations. Then, using the comments as a guide, revise the draft. Either type a new version or do your revising by hand. (Save your revision so you can work with it further after reading the next chapter.)

For additional writing, reading, and research resources, go to www.mycomplab.com and choose **Nadell/Langan/Comodromos' *The Longman Writer*, 7/e.**