

## Self-Editing Guide

Learning to self-edit is an important skill for university writing and for life. It makes for better papers and improves your writing and critical thinking as a whole. Students often find it difficult, however, to know what to look for or where to start. This guide provides a blueprint for the editing process. It's recommended that you start with larger, global issues before moving onto grammar and sentence-level concerns, as the content of your paper may change as you go along.

**General Strategies:** Before you start editing, consider these strategies.

1. **Time Management:** Start early and leave enough time to do several revisions with breaks in between. Give yourself some space and time so you can be a more objective editor.
2. **Hard Copy:** Working from a printed version of your paper (double-spaced) will help you catch things you may scan over on a screen, and writing your corrections and notes will help you keep track of what you've changed.
3. **Resources:** Use your human resources (professor, TA, tutor) and collect physical resources (dictionary/thesaurus, style guide, pens/highlighters) to help you along the way.

**Global Revision:** Build a reverse outline to check for content and flow.

1. **Thesis:** Underline your thesis. Does it answer the entire prompt? Is it argumentative (could someone disagree with you)? Does it answer the questions What?, How?, and Why?
2. **Body Paragraphs:** Summarize each paragraph in a sentence or two. Are there multiple topics in one paragraph, or are two paragraphs about the same topic? Should any be combined or separated?
3. **Conclusion:** Do you connect back to the thesis? Do you state further implications?
4. **Cohesion:** Do your body paragraphs support your thesis? Is your conclusion different than your thesis? Should you adjust your thesis? Do your body paragraphs flow logically? Should you switch them around?

**Paragraph Revision:** Identify the parts of your paragraph and how they work together.

1. **Topic Sentence:** Underline your topic sentence. Does it support your thesis?
2. **Examples:** Highlight your examples. Do they represent the topic? Do they need to be cited?
3. **Analysis:** Highlight analysis in a different color. Do you have enough? Does it connect your examples to your argument?
4. **Transitions:** Do you have transition words and phrases that help your paragraph flow?

**Sentence-Level Revision:** Lastly, focus on each sentence to make a polished final draft.

1. **Read Aloud (Slowly):** This helps you catch typos, repetition, and obvious errors.
2. **Read Backwards:** Starting with the last sentence and working your way back can help you avoid unintentionally filling in the blanks or skipping over something.
3. **Identify Common Errors:** On a separate paper, make a list of recurring errors that you have noticed in your writing or have been pointed out to you on other papers. Study how to correct them and be on the lookout for them in future editing.
4. **Get Perspective:** Finally, ask someone else (friend, parent, TA, tutor) to look over your paper for anything you might have missed.