

Revising and Editing an Essay

So, you've finished writing your essay? But, it's not over yet! If you want those good results, give the revising and editing process the time and attention it deserves. The following provides some revising and editing checklists and some procedural tips to help you focus on:

1. Structure and content
2. Mechanics and presentation
3. Tips and procedures



SPELLING and GRAMMAR CHECKERS can be useful tools in your word processing program if you use them well. Sometimes they can help you to think about your spelling and grammar, but other times they can be misleading. Therefore, you need to understand the benefits and limitations of these word processing tools and use your own knowledge of writing rules.

[VIDEO DEMO: Writing Editing and Proofreading your Essay](#) (Long, but spot on!)

1. Structure and content

- **Introduction: Follow the pattern**
 - >Did you begin with defining your MAIN TOPIC (first sentence)?
 - >Have you followed the first sentence by stating which PART of the MAIN topic will be addressed (next sentence/s)?
 - >Did you finish the introduction by declaring your thesis statement (what you intend to argue)?
- **Body: Check each paragraph**
 - >Is there a clear topic sentence?
 - >Do the support sentences fit the topic sentence?
 - >Is there enough support (paraphrases, direct quotes)?
 - >Have you overused direct quotes that could be paraphrases?
 - >Have you used in-text references correctly?
 - >Is there any irrelevant material?
 - >Are the paragraphs logically sequenced?
- **Conclusion**
 - >Does the conclusion fit the introduction?
 - >Is the topic re-stated without being repeated?
 - >Is the line of argument re-stated?
- **Content**
 - >Has the question been answered? If there is more than one part, have you answered each part?
 - >Are the points relevant?
 - >Is the evidence convincing?
 - >Is there sufficient evidence?
 - >Is your evidence from academic sources?
 - >Are all quotes and references accurately referenced?

See also ASO online workshop on [Introduction paragraphs](#).

See also ASO online workshops: [Beginner paragraphs](#); [Perfecting paragraphs](#); [Academic paragraphs](#).
See also topics in ASO factsheets on [Writing essays, reviews & reports](#).

See also ASO online workshop on [Conclusion paragraphs](#).

See also ASO online workshop on [Question analysis](#)
See also ASO factsheet on [Analysing the question](#).

2. Mechanics and presentation

In her article “Why I write” in *The Guardian*, Chevalier (2006) states that:

Never think that what you've written can't be improved. You should always try to make the sentence that much better and make the argument that much clearer. Go over and over the words and reshape them as many times as is needed.

- **Word level**

- >Are the words chosen carefully?
- >Are there any spelling errors?
- >Is the language non-discriminatory?
- >Are transitional words and phrases used appropriately?

See also ASO factsheets on [Writing correctly](#); [Writing essays, reviews & reports](#).

- **Presentation**

- >Is a title page required?
- >Does it include your name and student number, the name and code number of the subject, the title of the essay and the assignment number? (Use footer or header tool)
- >Does the title of the essay appear at the top of the first page?
- >Are the pages numbered?
- >Is double spacing used for the text?
- >Is double spacing used for longer quotes that are indented?
- >Is a complete list of references or a bibliography included on a separate page?
- >Does it conform to the conventions of the referencing system used?

3. Tips and procedures

TIP 1: First draft: It helps if you leave it for a day or so then read again with ‘fresh’ eyes. Check for typing and spelling errors using the computer spell and grammar check. Get another person to read it and give you feedback as it is often hard to ‘see’ your own errors.

TIP 2: Revising: The best time to revise is not right after you've completed a draft (although at times this is unavoidable). Instead, wait a few hours--even a day or two if possible--in order to gain some distance from your work. This way you'll be less protective of your writing and prepared to make changes.

TIP 3: Improving: Revision also means looking again at what you have written to see how you can improve it. One method is to start revising as soon as you begin a rough draft, and restructure and rearrange sentences as you go. Then, you can return to the draft, perhaps several times, to make further revisions. Revising means reconsidering the topic, the readers, and the purpose. Taking the time to rethink the approach may encourage you to make major changes in the content and structure of your work.

TIP 4: Editing: You should keep in mind that revising involves much more than just correcting errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Revising involves editing your work for meaning and considering whether you have appropriate information for the essay question. You shouldn't waste time carefully correcting a paper that you haven't edited at all because you may end up discarding entire sentences and paragraphs. Evaluate what you have written before you try to fix it.

TIP 5: One last bit of advice: Read your work aloud when you revise. You may hear problems in your writing that you can't see.