



REWRITING REVISION: A HYBRID PROCESS

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Every time you begin writing, the words that you write appear before you. Each pen stroke or finger pulse produces words and characters that you can then read. The goal of writing is to get what you read to be equal to what you want to write. This is a nearly impossible task to succeed at on the first try. This is why writers are not people who sit alone and crank out page after page of poetic perfection. Instead, they keep reading and altering their writing (often drastically) until the way that they read it connects to what they wanted to write. The process that unites the way that you read with the way that you write is revision, and it will guide you through the entire writing process. Revision gives you elbow room whenever your writing gets too crowded, in your head, on the page, or in between.

Revision grants you the ability to change your writing. You can take risks, write out absurdities, make an essay rhyme, or leave out the thesis of a thirty-page paper, all because of revision. The words that end up on any page you are composing do not have to stay where they are. You are equipped with erasers, delete keys, and pens to scribble with whenever you are writing—use them. Better yet, open new documents and tear out new pages to write on. Start fresh and keep writing.

If you are a seasoned poet assigned a 15-page paper on taxonomy, revision allows you to play with the concept of your paper. Take whatever ideas you have and write a poem, play with the words, play with the idea of writing a paper, play with your writing. Revision allows you to write the way that you write and fit it to whatever constraints you are given.

As you wander your way through each step of the writing process, revise. Revision will likely carry you to the next step. After you have brainstormed and written a two-page freewrite about the particularities of the sub-prime mortgage crisis, the way to get to a first draft is to read back over your freewrite and let your writing catch your eye. Your eye may be drawn to effective adverbs, to dull adjectives, or to how your conclusion does not pair well with your thesis. The words, phrases, and ideas that catch your eye will guide you in what to write next, whether it's more adverbs in the second half, snazzier adjectives, or a brand new thesis.

Reading through and identifying meaning in your writing is revision. Taking what you think is the final draft of your novel and discovering that the central character really wouldn't have moved to Belgium, she would have stayed put, and then rewriting the ending, is revision. And that twenty-

page description of the farm? Only the first page was descriptive, the rest kind of dragged on about combine harvesters. Reading your writing and identifying inaccuracies, finding boring parts and adding sentences, is revision. Taking pages out, finding a synonym for a word, or conducting an antonymic translation of a paragraph, is revision.

Revision functions this way because reading does not follow the same process as writing. As you read your work between stages of the writing process, parts will catch your eye, parts will drag on for too long, parts may not make sense, and parts may make perfect sense. You will only be able to see all of these parts of your writing by reading and revising it. The act of writing prevents you from reading, which is why writing is a process. You start, you stop, you start other processes. No one can write a paper while proofreading it. Thoughts do not flow into writing when you are constantly stopping after every word to check it over. Let your writing flow playfully, and worry about what that writing reads like when you are reading it. Read to revise, and don't write to create something perfect.

As you continue revising, the parts that catch your eye in your paper may begin to melt away. The more you revise, the more the parts of your work become cohesive, and you start to encounter the whole of your writing. Making your writing whole requires a hybrid process of tailoring how you read to how you write and allowing revision to be part of each step of your writing process.