

# Guide for Revising Essays

## **BEFORE you submit an essay to your instructor:**

1. After you have typed your first draft, set it aside for a day or two. Do not confuse “first draft” with “working” or “rough” draft. A first draft should be reasonably polished and complete, which means you’ve had more than one editing session with the paper before you submit it.
2. Reread your paper slowly and carefully. (After you have read your paper forward, consider reading your paper backward sentence by sentence—this will help you catch typos.)
3. Note any problems in grammar, punctuation, mechanics, spelling, or organization.
4. See a tutor if you want some feedback on organization and development.
5. Correct the errors before turning in the first draft.

## **AFTER your instructor returns your paper:**

1. Read your paper, noting the instructor’s marginal comments. If the instructor’s comments seem overwhelming, put the paper away for a few hours or a few days, and then come back to it.
2. Note any references to the Hacker handbook; these numbers refer to those sections of your handbook that deal with the problems your instructor found in your writing. **Read the sections of the handbook that are noted; don’t ignore these details.**
3. Reread your paper again—slowly.
4. Seek clarification for comments or suggestions that you don’t fully understand from your instructor and/or a tutor.
5. Take ownership of your material. If the editor marks a comma splice in one place, chances are great that they occur elsewhere in your work, too -- don’t assume that the editor will have marked **every** surface error that he or she finds. It is up to **you** to review your own work for weak areas that have been identified.
6. Revise all the problems in your paper (those which your instructor indicated and those you find). Make the hard changes, too -- ones that take some thought and perhaps require overhauling whole paragraphs or inserting new material for development and/or clarity. Revision ought to take some time. If all you do is go through and fix spelling, punctuation, and formatting problems, ignoring the more substantial recommendations, your grade is likely to reflect this poor prioritizing.

7. Reread your revised paper—slowly. Make sure you have corrected all your problems, and make sure you don't have any new problems to address.
8. See a tutor if you want some additional feedback on your revisions.
9. Submit your Revised Draft on or before the due date.

### **Ongoing Activities**

1. Note any frequent problems in your paper and try to avoid those problems in subsequent papers.
2. The revision process takes time. If you wait until the last minute to write and/or revise a paper, you create more work for yourself later. Get an early start on assignments and revisions when possible.
3. Don't be surprised if in subsequent revisions, new suggestions for edits show up on old material. This merely means that you have mastered one level of revision and are now ready to concentrate on something new.
4. Take responsibility for your own writing. Instructors and tutors are excellent resources, but in the end, **you alone are responsible** for the quality of your work. If you are disappointed in a paper's grade, you have only yourself to blame.