Analyzing and Revising Your Draft

Analyze for organization and content:

♦ Skim and post-outline your draft:
    o If thesis not there or unclear, revise or write it in the margins to insert later.
  o Each body paragraph: Underline main idea. Bracket supporting information.
  o Write functions of each paragraph in the margins.
  o Look at what you’ve marked.
    o Check introduction and conclusion against body paragraphs:
      ▪ Thesis should be an umbrella for all main points--if not, revise thesis or delete tangential ideas.
      ▪ Make sure all the main supporting points are set up in introduction and summarized in conclusion.
  o Consider overall for thoroughness and order:
    ▪ If ideas duplicated – delete or combine them.
    ▪ If ideas scattered – move them so they progress without artificial transitions.
    ▪ If ideas not supported – add information.

♦ Double-check the assignment:
  o Underline the criteria:
    ▪ Global issues: type of paper (i.e., analysis, argument, reflection, exposition), type of thesis, types of supporting information, writing style, and tone
    ▪ Formatting: page length, citation style, and number of sources
    ▪ Any other element the professor mentioned in the written prompt or during class.
  o Check each criterion against what you’ve written so far.
Revise for precision:

♦ Use handbooks to check grammatical rules and citation style.

♦ Read your draft aloud, pencil in hand. Circle every place you stumble.
  o At the end of each paragraph, figure out why you stumbled; most likely, there are grammatical errors or awkward wording.

♦ If questioning word choice, use a dictionary. You can use a thesaurus alongside a dictionary, but not a thesaurus by itself.

♦ If questioning punctuation, find the subject and predicate, then connecting phrases. Remember that punctuation separates and signals. Use a handbook to see which punctuation marks fit your meaning.

♦ Consider audience – be kind to the professor/reader:
  o Check critically for clarity and sharpness.
    • If you’re not sure whether a word or sentence is needed, consider whether the reader would miss anything if it were gone.
  o Cut generalizations that cannot be supported. Replace with specific information.
    • As everyone/most citizens/experts know ...
    • No one ever ...
  o Cut stock phrases. Ask yourself if the words could appear in anyone’s paper.
    • In today’s society,
    • In the area/arena of,
    • It was a time of great change.

♦ Keep a list of issues that tend to come up in your writing.
  o After you think you’re done, go back over your draft looking for each issue, separately.
    • For instance, if pronouns are problematic, as they often are, read through your draft noting only pronouns and which nouns they refer to.