

## Week Four: Stages of Writing\_ Composing, Revising and Editing

- Composing paragraphs
- Revising
- Editing

At this stage, you develop your outline into a paragraph (writing your first draft)

**Activity 1:** Develop one of the outlines that you have written in the previous session into a paragraph.

[illegible]

## Revising

The term first draft suggests quite accurately that there will be other drafts, or versions, of your writing. Only in the direst situations, such as an in-class examination when you have time for only one draft, should you be satisfied with a single effort.

What you do beyond the first draft is revising and editing. Revision concerns itself with organization, content, and language effectiveness. Editing involves a final correcting of mistakes in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. In practice, editing and revising are not always separate activities although writers usually wait until the next-to-the-last draft to edit some minor details and attend to other small points that can be easily overlooked.

Successful revision almost always involves intense, systematic rewriting. You should learn to look for certain aspects of skilful writing as you enrich and repair your first draft. To help you recall these aspects so that you can keep them in mind and examine your material in a comprehensive fashion.

An acronym in which each letter suggests an important feature of good writing and revision enables you to memorize the features of good writing quickly. Soon you will be able to recall and refer to them automatically.

These features need not be attended to individually when you revise your writing, although they may be. They need not be attended to in the order presented here. The acronym is CLUESS (pronounced “clues”), which provides this guide: Coherence, Language, Unity, Emphasis, Support, Sentences.

### COHERENCE

Coherence is the flow of ideas, with each idea leading logically and smoothly to the next. It is achieved by numbering parts or otherwise indicating (*first, second, third, then, next, soon*, and so on), giving directions (according to space, as in “To the right is a map, and to the left of that map is a bulletin board”), using transitional words (*however, otherwise, therefore, similarly, hence, on the other hand, then, consequently, accordingly, thus*), using demonstrative pronouns (*this, that, those*), and moving in a clear order (from the least important to the most important or from the most important to the least important).

### LANGUAGE

Language here stands for diction or word choice: using words that clearly convey your ideas and are suitable for what you are writing and for your audience. In college writing, that means you will usually avoid slang and clichés such as “a barrel of laughs,” “happy as a clam,” and “six of one and a half dozen of another.” Your writing will contain standard grammar and usage. If you are writing with a computer, use the thesaurus feature for careful diction, but keep in mind that no two words share exactly the same meaning.

### UNITY

Unity in a paragraph begins with a good topic sentence. Then everything in your paragraph should be related and subordinated to that topic sentence. Repetition of a key word or phrase can make the unity even stronger.

### EMPHASIS

Emphasize important ideas by using position (the most emphatic parts of a work are the beginning and the end), repetition (repeat key words and phrases), and isolation (a short, direct sentence among longer ones will usually command attention).

## SUPPORT

Support is the material that backs up, justifies, or proves your topic sentence. Work carefully with the material from your outline (or list or cluster) to make sure that your ideas are well supported. If your paragraph is inadequate and your ideas seem slender, you are probably generalizing and not explaining how you arrived at your conclusions. Avoid repetition that does not add to the content; use details and examples; indicate parts and discuss relationships; Your reader cannot accept your ideas unless he or she knows by what reasoning or use of evidence you developed them.

## SENTENCES

Be sure your sentences are complete (not fragments) and that you have not incorrectly combined word groups that could be sentences (comma splices and run-ons).

Write as many drafts as necessary, revising as you go for all the aspects of effective writing. Do not confuse revising with editing (the final stage of the writing process); do not get bogged down in fixing such things as spelling and punctuation.

## Editing

Editing, the final stage of the writing process, involves a careful examination of your work. Look for problems with **Capitalization, Omissions, Punctuation, and Spelling (COPS)**.

Because you can find spelling errors in others' writing more easily than in your own, a computerized spell checker is extremely useful. However, a spell checker will not detect wrong words that are correctly spelled, so you should always proofread.

Before you submit your writing to your instructor, do what almost all professional writers do before sending their material along: Read it aloud, to yourself or to a willing accomplice. Reading material aloud will help you catch any awkwardness of expression, omission, and misplacement of words, and other problems that are easily overlooked by an author.

As you can see, writing is a process and is not a matter of just sitting down and producing sentences. The parts of the process from prewriting to revising to editing are connected, and your movement is ultimately forward, but this process allows you to go back and forth in the recursive manner discussed earlier. If your outline is not working, perhaps the flaw is in your topic sentence. You may need to go back and fix it. If one section of your paragraph is skimpy, perhaps you will have to go back and reconsider the pertinent material in your outline or clustering. There you might find more details or alter a statement so that you can move into more fertile areas of thought.

Norton wrote the following first draft, marked it for revision, and then completed the final draft. For simplification, only this draft is shown, although a typical paper might require several drafts, including one in which the author has done nothing but edit his or her revised writing.

## Magic Johnson<sup>^</sup>, an NBA Great

(National Basketball Association)

Some NBA players are good because they <sup>have a special talent</sup> are good in one area <sup>such as</sup> shooting, passing, or rebounding. Magic Johnson was great because he <sup>a</sup> <sup>NBA star</sup> was good in all of those things <sup>excellent</sup> and more. <sup>shooting, passing, rebounding, and leading.</sup> As a shooter few have <sup>ever equaled him.</sup> been able to do what he could. He could slam, shovel, hook, and fire from three-point range. <sup>—all with deadly accuracy</sup> When it came to free throws, he led all NBA players in shooting percentage in 1988–1989. <sup>While</sup> <sup>ing</sup> Then he averaged more than twenty points per game, he helped other become stars. <sup>s</sup> <sup>with his passes</sup> <sup>(the quarterback of basketball),</sup> As the point guard he was always near the top in the league in <sup>s</sup> assists and was famous for his <sup>“</sup> <sup>”</sup> no-look passes. <sup>its</sup> Which often surprised even his teammates with their precision.

<sup>When he was not shooting or passing, he was rebounding.</sup>

<sup>In professional basketball</sup>

<sup>^</sup> A top rebounding guard is unusual, <sup>^</sup> but Magic, standing at six feet nine inches <sup>u</sup> <sup>leap</sup> tall, could bump shoulders and jump with anyone. These three qualities

made him probably the most spectacular triple-double threat of all time.

*"Triple-double" means reaching two digits in scoring, assists, and rebounding.*

Magic did not need more for greatness in the NBA, but he had more. He was

also an inspirational team leader With his everlasting smile and boundless energy,

<sup>He</sup> Always believing <sup>ed</sup> in himself and his team. When his team was down by a

point and three seconds <sup>remained on the game clock,</sup> <sup>the fans</sup> were left, you always looked for Magic to get

the ball. <sup>They</sup> Then you watched as he dribbled once, <sup>he</sup> faded, <sup>he</sup> leaped, <sup>he</sup> twisted, and

<sup>he</sup> hooked one in from twenty feet <sup>! That was magic.</sup> That was Magic.

## Moving from Outline to Paragraph: An Opening Example

Take a look at how one student went from an outline to a successful paragraph:

Mrs. Nevis, my eleventh-grade geography teacher, was the worst teacher I've ever had. To begin with, she always picked on students and seemed to enjoy it. For example, my friend Jerry had a hard time memorizing the names of countries, so she called him a "brainless wonder." Also, she laughed at students when they made a mistake or answered incorrectly. I could never pronounce the word "Antarctic," so she always made me say it just so she could laugh at me. Her favorite way to pick on students, however, was to make us stay after school for no reason at all. Once, when I sneezed three times in a row, she assigned me one hour of detention. Next, she had very poor teaching skills. For instance, she could never explain a problem or an idea clearly. One time, when we asked her the difference between a glacier and an ice floe, she got so confused that she told us to look it up on the Internet. When she graded our essays, she never gave us useful comments. She once gave me a grade of "C" on a paper, and her only comment was "Try harder." Finally, she had distracting personal habits. She actually liked to eat food during class and even talked with her mouth full! Also, her clothes looked like she had slept in them or cleaned out her garage in them. If there were an award for worst teacher in history, Mrs. Nevis would get my vote.

### MAIN IDEA

Mrs. Nevis was my worst teacher.

### TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSION

To begin with,

### SUPPORT POINT 1

she picked on students.

- used rude nicknames
- laughed at us
- made us stay after school

### TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSION

Next,

### SUPPORT POINT 2

she had poor teaching skills.

- did not explain ideas clearly
- put no comments on essays

### TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSION

Finally,

**Activity 2:** Revise and edit the paragraph you have written in **Activity 1**

