

Revision Checklist

Subject, audience, purpose

- What's the most important thing I want to say about my subject?
- Who am I writing this paper for? What would my reader want to know about the subject? What does my reader already know about it?
- Why do I think the subject is worth writing about? Will my reader think the paper was worth reading?
- What verb explains what I'm trying to do in this paper (tell a story, compare X and Y, describe Z)?
- Does my first paragraph answer questions 1-4? If not, why not?

Organization

- How many specific points do I make about my subject? Did I overlap or repeat any points? Did I leave my points out or add some that aren't relevant to the main idea?
- How many paragraphs did I use to talk about each point?
- Why did I talk about them in this order? Should the order be changed?
- How did I get from one point to the next? What signposts did I give the reader?

Paragraphing (ask these questions of every paragraph)

- What job is this paragraph supposed to do? How does it relate to the paragraph before and after it?
- What's the topic idea? Will my reader have trouble finding it?
- How many sentences did it take to develop the topic idea? Can I substitute better examples, reasons, or details?
- How well does the paragraph hold together? How many levels of generality does it have? Are the sentences different lengths and types? Do I need transitions? When I read the paragraph out loud, did it flow smoothly?

Sentences (ask these questions of every sentence)

- Which sentences in my paper do I like the most? The least?
- Can my reader "see" what I'm saying? What words could I substitute for people, things, this/that, aspect, etc.?
- Is this sentence "fat"?
- Can I combine this sentence with another one?
- Can I add adjectives and adverbs or find a more lively verb?

Things to check last

- Did I check spelling and punctuation? What kinds of grammar or punctuation problems did I have in my last paper?
- How does my paper end? Did I keep the promises I made to my reader at the beginning of the paper?
- When I read the assignment again, did I miss anything?
- What do I like best about this paper? What do I need to work on in the next paper?

— from *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* by Erika Lindemann