

Revision

Revision is the stage in the writing process where we revisit our draft with the idea that we are going to make our writing shine. So often our students believe that revising means they did something wrong and now they have to fix it and make it right. That is a paradigm we need to change. Not every piece of writing will deserve to go through revision and editing, only our BEST pieces deserve that. We need to help our students understand that when we revise we have the opportunity to show off! It is in revision that I can make my writing really shine so it dazzles the reader. It's the best part!

During revision, writers consider the needs of their audience. They reread their piece to be sure they have chosen just the right words to deliver their message and meaning and “paint the picture.” Writers check for clarity, lapses in time, the quality of the details. They examine their choice of sentence structure for variations and to see if they can change any sentence structure to enhance the meaning or message. They thoughtfully evaluate their punctuation for the same thing. They ask themselves if the reader might be left with any questions. They may add, delete, or move text to further aid the reader’s understanding. They identify weak verbs and vague nouns, or strings of adverbs and adjectives that are common in drafting. During revision they replace weak verbs with strong ones; change vague nouns to more specific ones, and add adjectives and adverbs only if the verb or noun still needs emphasis. This is why there should be plenty of room on the drafting paper. They can use sticky notes, cut and paste, whatever it takes.

To be successful revisers, students need to see real revision by real writers, and that includes your writing. They should also be taught specific targets to revise for, most often presented at the beginning of writing workshop in a mini-lesson that may last 5 to 15 minutes. As Ralph Fletcher explains in his book *Live Writing* (1999), teaching students specific strategies for revising is like giving them the tools they need to get the revision work done. Keep in mind that young writers can only revise for 1 to 3 things at a time if we want them to remember it. Using mentor text as

models and having students mimic that author's skill for a specific target is a powerful way to teach revision. Before the student is expected to try this, the teacher must first identify the target skill in mentor text, then apply to her own work while modeling for the class. They need to be shown ways to physically manage revision. To add words or phrases, they can use sticky notes, or insert a caret (^). To move text they can circle the portion of text they want to move and draw an arrow to the new location. They can use highlight text they want to change, or even cut and paste to move text. Each of these management strategies need to be taught and modeled as mini-lessons.

Remember that revision takes place right on the draft. Many think revision means copying over or they confuse it with editing and think it is about correctness. Never present revision as cleaning up a *sloppy copy*. Remember revision should be an exciting stage. When the teacher models revision with great enthusiasm, the students' attitudes will be similar. Lucy Calkins suggests using purple pens for revision. She tells her students that purple is the color of royals, of kings and queens, and only revision deserves such a majestic color. Janet Angelillo explains in her book, *Making Revision Matter* (2002), we should teach students that whatever they have written is not carved in stone. How do they think they got better at computer games? They returned to the same game, played around with it and found other routes or attack strategies. During writing they should do the same; revisit their piece and play around with it to get it just the way they want it.

The more often a student goes through the revision stage of the writing process, the earlier those things he has learned to revise for show up in his drafts.

We also need to help our students understand the difference between revising and editing. Editing is only about the correctness of conventions, and we edit just before our piece is ready to go out into the world as a published piece.

For the purposes of this course the sample revision paper has been revised for "juicy" words with an emphasis of finding places where a stronger verb could be used.