

OWLS Writing Guides: Checklist for Revising



This review-and-revise checklist should be used in conjunction with any checklist or rubric that may be provided by your instructor.

HIGHER ORDER CONCERNS (These are the ‘big picture’ issues. Attend to these before worrying about grammar and spelling!)

- Does the essay address the assignment as far as topic, purpose, structure, sources, length, and format? *(If the paper doesn't fulfill the assignment, nothing else matters.)*
- Does the introduction present the topic in a way that engages the reader's attention and interest? Does it provide information that helps the reader understand the topic and see its importance?
- Does the essay have a main point, a thesis—an assertion about the topic that can be proven, shown, or demonstrated? Is the thesis stated clearly in the introduction? Is the thesis too broad or too narrow? Too dull and ordinary? Too factual or obvious?
- Is the paper organized clearly and logically? Can you discern the method of organization and describe it? (E.g., emphatic, chronological, or spatial order; problem-solution or refutation argument)
- Does each body paragraph support the thesis and contain a topic sentence at or near its beginning?
- Do the sentences in each paragraph support the idea stated in that topic sentence?
- Are the relationships between ideas clear? Do ideas transition smoothly from one to the next? Is a transition word or phrase needed anywhere to make the idea flow more logically?
- Does the evidence adequately and logically support the thesis? Are enough supporting details and examples provided in each paragraph?
- Is the level of diction (formal/informal) appropriate for the audience? What is the paper's tone of voice, and is this tone appropriate for the audience?
- Does the conclusion end the paper in a memorable way, such as by putting forth a final, thoughtful reflection on the topic or by making a strong call to action? Or does it simply restate points that have already been made?

LOWER ORDER CONCERNS (Focus on these only after you have attended to all HOC's.)

- Are the sentences clear, concise, and easy to understand? Or are they awkward, wordy, and hard to understand?
- Are the sentences free of errors in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics?
- Do the sentences show variety in terms of sentence patterns? Or do too many sentences of the same pattern distract the reader, such as a string of 'simple' subject-predicate sentences in a row?
- Is word choice accurate and precise? Is each word the best word for the job, not the biggest or fanciest word?
- Are quotations clearly introduced, and do they flow smoothly within the text? Are long quotes set off from the text correctly?
- Are sources properly cited throughout the paper?
- Are formatting guidelines for the assignment followed (MLA, APA, Turabian, etc.)?
- Is the title appropriate? Is it too broad or narrow? Does it capture the reader's attention?

Office of Writing and Language Services, LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, ML 241, 865-2297