

University of Rochester School of Nursing
Writing Center
REVISION STRATEGIES LIST
INVENTION

1. BRAINSTORMING/FREE-WRITING

Answer these questions: What do you know about your topic? What do you think you know? What are you unsure of? What part of the paper can you write without outside evidence or based on your personal experience (if any)?

2. DIGGING DEEP

Write your area of interest at the top of a sheet of paper, then brainstorm a list of possible arguments. Narrow your approach by thinking of all involved parties.

Example: Congress ought to pass a law to unseal all adoption records. Parties involved: adoptees, adoptive parents, birth parents, adoption attorneys, lobbyists, children's rights groups, members of Congress. For whom do *you* advocate?

3. EXAMINING EVIDENCE: (You can use this in Development too.)

Develop a list of search terms for your research by brainstorming the different elements of your topic that you could research and identifying the keywords that relate to each element. As you research, you will learn new, key, insider terms that relate to your topic: add these to your list.

Schedule an appointment with our librarian: daniel_trout@urmc.rochester.edu or 585-276-3475 or request a lit search at:

https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/libraries/miner/literature_search/

- Use the library database to find different kinds of sources.
http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/libraries/Miner/teaching_and_learning/blackboard/coursepage/son_bb-library.html
- Once you have some sources, read each actively: Make lists of key terms. Make a timeline of important events. Make note of key players or experts in the field. List all sources the writer uses. Look up definitions of important words you do not understand.
- Develop a graphic organizer for note taking: include categories for important evidence, the author of that evidence, and how that evidence will help you make your case, or how it relates to your focus. The Cornell Notes, rhetorical précis, or analytic summary are good tools for summarizing this information.
- Make sure you comprehend all source material. Check with a peer, professor, or writing specialist if you have questions about the meaning of source information.
- Analyze the source by breaking it into its elements: ideas and voices, competing claims, facts, opinions or themes. http://guides.library.vcu.edu/ld.php?content_id=1720467
- Synthesize the source material with other information you know or ideas you have. Most scholars use a literature synthesis matrix, as explained here <https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/resources/synthesis-matrix-2.pdf>

- You can also meet with a **SON writing coach** at any point during your writing process. Just complete a self-referral form at: <https://www.son.rochester.edu/caps/>

4. STASIS THEORY

This is a four-question pre-writing invention method from ancient Greece whereby the writer investigates:

- The facts (conjecture)
- The nature of the issue (definition)
- The seriousness of the issue (quality)
- The plan of action (policy)

You can find more information about the stasis theory at:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/736/01/>

5. QUESTIONS: The Inquiry Method (You can use this in Development too.)

- First, write 5 KEY Questions about your topic beginning with How, What, Where or Why. (Make sure no question can be answered with only a yes or now.)
- Second, list the 3 of those 5 KEY Questions which most interest you, leaving space below each one.
- Third, write 3 MORE questions about each of those 3 Key Questions in the space you have left. Same rule applies: use How, What, Why, Where so you do not get yes or no answers.

6. UNDERSTANDING THE ASSIGNMENT SHEET

- Read the assignment sheet all the way to the end. Reread the assignment sheet, circling important words, that explain what you are being asked to *do* or the steps you are being asked to take to accomplish the objective. Hint: Go for the NOUNS & VERBS!
- Next, write the goal or objective of the assignment in your own words! Then, write: What skill does the professor want you to develop by doing this assignment? Hint: Look at the rubric. This should be aligned to course objectives or student learning outcomes.

FOCUS

7. GETTING TO THE POINT

Circle the keywords in your introduction and/or topic sentences. Then, combine them into a single concise sentence. Make sure this sentence explains a process or concept, or argues a fact, a policy, or a judgment and WHY your essay is significant.

8. POLLING the AUDIENCE

Fill in this sentence: I am writing to an audience of _____ who believes _____ in order to persuade them to _____.

9. REVERSE OUTLINE

If your paper is well developed but lacks a strong thesis, outline each paragraph of your paper. Combine your main points into a single, strong, argument—now you have a thesis! This is also a good method to analyze the logical chain of reasoning you present.

https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/twc/sites/utsc.utoronto.ca.twc/files/resource-files/Reverse%20Outline_0.pdf

10. WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

Write 20 titles *as fast as you can*. Choose the title that most closely expresses the main point you want to make and rewrite it as a thesis.

DEVELOPMENT

11. COMPARE AND CONTRAST (Can be used in FOCUS too).

Any time your argument asks you to consider two or more arguments, use the “compare and contrast” strategy as a graphic organizer:

- Create three columns, one for categories, Subject (or argument), Subject B, and implications (are the subjects similar or different?).

Categories	Subject A	Subject B	Implications

- Why do these similarities, differences, and implications matter?
- Fill in this sentence: Although Subject A and Subject B (differ or are the same) because _____, their differences/similarities are more significant because _____.

12. CURIOUS SIBLING

Push your idea forward by asking “Why? Why? Why?” Repeat at least 10 times. Rank the three most relevant explanations and incorporate them into your essay. (See the Inquiry Method in #5 also.)

13. DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

Identify your opponent's argument. Now refute what your opponent says point by point.

14. THINK CRITICALLY

- What credible firsthand or secondhand evidence supports your point of view: Facts, statistics, expert testimony, or research you have conducted yourself such as interviews, experiments, surveys, or personal experience and anecdotes?
- How will you organize your reasoning: Inductive, deductive, most persuasive to least, cause and effect, compare/contrast?
- How can you appeal to reason (logos), emotion (pathos), and establish author credibility?
- How can you develop your ideas and make them come alive: give examples, provide details, define terms, analyze a subject or process, divide and classify, make comparisons, explore a specific cause/effect?

15. EXPLORE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE THESIS

- So what? Why is the information I provided or the position I supported in this essay important?
- What now? Now that readers have read your essay and understood your thesis, how should they change their **feelings, ideas, and actions**?
- If my thesis is true, what else might also be true? What is the logical extension of your point of view?

16. FIVE SENSES

Develop with sense details: What do you see? Hear? Feel? Taste? Smell? See if you can create an entire scene for the reader.

17. FULL CIRCLE CONCLUSION

If you created a scene or story for your introduction, write a continuation of the scene or conclusion to your story. Example: if your introduction illustrates a problem, what will the scene look like if the solution for which you argued is implemented?

18. THE REPORTER

Think like a journalist and answer the big questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Other questions to consider: Who benefits? WHO is making the MONEY, or where is the MONEY going or coming from?

19. PUT ON DIFFERENT HATS

Answer these questions:

- How many disciplines (academic subjects) can you connect to your topic?
- How do the ideas of these academic experts from different disciplines connect to your topic (and each other)?
- How does looking at your topic from the perspective of different academic experts change the way you think about your topic? What questions, conflicts and/or evidence might they raise?

20. MAKE IT PERSONAL

Our brains are hard-wired to understand stories in both an emotional and logical way. Use a real-life story or example to illustrate the issue or problem at a personal level (be mindful of confidentiality if you are discussing a patient). This is especially effective as an introduction technique. When used in combination with the “Full Circle” strategy it creates a classic and memorable conclusion.

STRUCTURE (RHETORICAL ORGANIZATION)

21. FOLLOW THE LEADER

Follow your thesis statement. Make sure every topic sentence uses the language of your thesis statement or refers to an idea in your thesis.

22. THE PARAGRAPH SHUFFLE

Create a set of index cards, with one card for each paragraph in your essay. Write one idea per index card. If you have more than one idea in each paragraph, write the second (and third, etc.) idea on a separate card. Now, shuffle the cards. Inspect the order. Try rearranging the cards to deliver your focus, ideas and overall message more effectively.

23. COLOR THE CATEGORIES

Use a highlighter to separate your ideas into categories. Use one color highlighter to mark all of your sentences dealing with one category in your essay. Use a different color to code the second category, etc. Now organize your essay into matching colors/categories.

24. THAT RHETORICAL STRUCTURE

Are you writing a lab report, a classical, legal, Toulmin, or Rogerian argument, a problem-solution, compare/contrast, cause and effect, process, narrative, or literary analysis? Each of these has a rhetorical structure you can find and follow.

PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATION and TRANSITIONS

25. WHO'S THE BOSS

Find the main idea or the strongest assertion of your paragraph (it may be in the middle) and move it to the beginning of the paragraph. Make sure the rest of the sentences in the paragraph support this idea. If you have sentences in this paragraph that do not support your topic sentence, develop them into their own paragraphs.

26. SHOW ME THE PROOF

Can you provide a specific example, reason, or piece of evidence to support your idea?

27. BASIC PARAGRAPH MODEL

Use this format to ensure your body paragraphs are focused, developed, organized and connected to your thesis. In addition to using this structure, your paragraph should include at least two credible sources of information to support your point.

Topic Sentence: a clearly stated opinion or assertion that supports or explains an essential part of your argument, as described in your thesis statement.

Evidence: information that directly supports your assertion, such as quantitative research results, data, statistics (see Evidence-Based Practice Guide https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/evidence-based-practice/docs/appendix_c_evidence_level_quality_guide.pdf).

Critical Thinking: an analysis, synthesis, evaluation, or application of the evidence, clearly explaining how the data support your assertion.

Transition/Wrap-Up: a concluding sentence that summarizes your assertion, how it supports the thesis, and/or how it connects to the main point of the next paragraph.

28. TRANSITION TEST: or Q & A

- Look at the last sentence of your body paragraph.
- Write three questions about your main idea. Begin each question with how, why, or what.
- Now look at the first sentence of the following paragraph--does it answer or respond to any one of those implied questions? If not...
- Write the answer to the question...
- That answer may fit as the first sentence of your paragraph that already exists.
- OR! You may need to create another new paragraph to fully develop this point.

29. THE SENTENCE SHUFFLE

Take a blank sheet of paper, and write each sentence of this paragraph on the sheet, but leave 5 or six spaces between each sentence. Now reorganize them. You can also use index cards: one card per sentence.

30. KEYWORD BRIDGE

Transition sentences make connections, or “build bridges,” between the main idea of the body paragraph you are working on, the main idea of the next, upcoming paragraph, and the thesis statement.

- Circle the keywords in your thesis, the topic sentence of the paragraph you are working on, and the topic sentence of your next, upcoming paragraph.
- Choose at least one keyword from each: (topic sentence, thesis, and upcoming topic sentence) and...
- Combine them with a transitional word (ex: thus, therefore, however, although, and so, furthermore, moreover, etc.). This is your transition sentence!

LOGIC and CRITICAL THINKING

31. DON'T ASSUME ANYTHING

How can you revise the sentence to say what you mean without typecasting, stereotyping or assuming “facts” that are not proven? Would a non-native English speaker understand?

32. AVOID GENERALIZATIONS

Words and phrases such as: everything, everyone, all the time, nothing, etc. need to be developed. Who is everyone? Which things make up everything? If nothing can be done, what is nothing? Or what was done that failed? Feel free to create lists.

33. SYNTHESIZE THE LITERATURE

Once you assess and summarize the research literature, it is time to synthesize the information to support your focus. Make a list of sources on the left. Then create categories to help you compare and contrast the sources in regard to perspectives, methods, results, conclusions, progression of thought, themes, controversies, etc. Now consider how these ideas relate to one another and with your own ideas and questions.

Sources	Methods	Results	Conclusions	Themes
Author A				
Author B				

34. LOGICAL FALLACY

A fallacy is an error in a line of reasoning and it weakens the argument. There are many common fallacies, such as: slippery slope, hasty generalization, circular reasoning, stating an either/or, straw man, ad hominem, red herring, post hoc ergo propter hoc, etc. Learn more about fallacies at: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/659/03/>

SENTENCE MECHANICS

35. ACTIVE PROOFREADING

First, **increase** the font size of your paper and print it. Re-read your essay aloud. As you read, point to each word with a writing utensil. Does it “sound” right? How many words are missing or misused? How many grammatical errors do you catch? Highlight or note errors first and then correct them. (You can also read your paper to a friend.)

36. AVOID USING “You” or “We”

“You” is usually not appropriate in academic writing because it is too vague and casual, or because it is an imperative (command), which creates distance from readers. Replace “you” with some specific group using third-person, plural nouns (like “readers,” “patients,” “nurses”). “We” is also vague, do not use “we” unless you are part of a research team describing your methods and results.

37. ELIMINATE WEASEL WORDS & PHRASES

Eliminate words that make a sentence less specific or direct, or weaken your argument. Examples: Basically, Generally, Always, A lot, Pretty Much, Some, Most, Things, Very, Really, Truly, Seriously, Honestly, Clearly, Legitimately, Obviously, That, Which is, Who is, The Reason Why Is Because.

38. MORE EDITING:

- Eliminate adverbs.
- Circle your pronouns and change them to nouns.
- Take verbs with prepositions and see if you can change the verbs to ONLY verbs. Examples: *Wake up to awaken, stand up to rise, fall down to collapse.*
- Use personal pronouns instead of articles: Example: the boat to her boat.

39. STEP-BY-STEP PARAPHRASING

- 1) Make a list of the author's main ideas. Using a Reverse Outline could be useful here.
- 2) Condense these ideas into as few sentences as possible. Be sure the paraphrase maintains the author's meaning yet is stated in your own words.
- 3) If you use three consecutive words or more from the author's text, you must put quotation marks around those exact words.
- 4) Always include an in-text citation for quotes and paraphrases. Even though you are using your own words in a paraphrase, the ideas still belong to the author and you need to give them credit (i.e., Author's Last Name, year).

40. KILL YOUR CLICHES

Replace overused thoughts or expressions (If you have heard more than 5 people say it, it is probably a cliché.) Can you think about what you really meant when you wrote this cliché? Express your thought in a different way; clichés are open to too many interpretations.

41. LEARNING APA CITATION

To cite properly, use the APA handbook or the APA Cheat Sheet (or online guide <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>) and then read through the examples to find the one that best fits your source. Then, attribute all quotes, paraphrases, summaries, facts, statistics, examples, study results, and ideas to the original authors by creating appropriate in-text citations and a References page. If you have a specific citation question you cannot find in the APA handbook, search the APA style blog <http://blog.apastyle.org/>

42. PASSIVE VERBS: WHO DID IT? WHAT DID THEY DO?

Circle all your passive verbs (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been). Who or what does the verb (the subject)? Rewrite your sentences so the actor acts!

43.19 ERRORS WORKSHEET

Get out the 19 Errors Worksheet -- each number on your essay corresponds to the numbered error of the worksheet. Correct your mistakes, using the worksheet as a guide.

References

Murray, D. (2001). *The craft of revision* (4th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers.

Troyka, L. Q. (2002). *Simon & Schuster handbook for writers* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Hacker, D. (2000). *Rules for writers*, (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford St. Martin's.

White, E. M. (2006). *Assigning, responding, evaluating: A writing teacher's guide*. Boston, MA: Bedford St. Martin's.