

revising a paper

When revising a paper, first, focus on the four most important elements, presented below in descending order of importance. If they are not working, then issues of syntax (e.g., sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar) hardly matter.

1) assignment:

Have you addressed all the necessary issues or questions? Make sure your paper is appropriate for the audience, subject matter, style, and length. If the paper does not probe deep enough into the subject, use pre-writing activities to generate ideas or ask yourself who, what, when, where, and why questions.

2) thesis or focus:

Have you clearly stated the main point or purpose? Does it accomplish what you set out to do? Does the purpose match the assignment?

3) organization:

Does the paper proceed logically? Can you discern a clear structure? Does the information supporting the purpose appear in a logical manner in terms of, for example, chronology, importance, general to specific, or cause and effect. Are the various sections of the paper linked together with appropriate transitions? Is there unity within paragraphs?

4) development:

Have you offered adequate evidence, support, or explanation to back up your thesis or purpose? Are there areas where more details, more examples, or more specifics are needed? For instance, are there sufficient textual examples, quotations, documented facts, authoritative opinion, and illustrations?

5) syntax:

Check for sentence structure, punctuation, word choice, spelling, awkward phrasing, inflated language/wordiness, sentence variety, and APA documentation problems. Read the paper aloud and from a printout copy, not the computer screen; a much more critical reading will result. Reading aloud will enable you to see and hear any problems of syntax. Stay attuned to those that reoccur.