

# Building a Revision Process

## CRIS Faculty Writing Accelerator

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## Reconceptualizing Writing

### Three Key Writing Principles

- Using writing to clarify your own thinking
- Committing to extensive revision
- Understanding the needs of your reader

### Writing as Thinking

Rather than a way of **capturing** what we think, writing can be understood as a way of **grasping** what we think.

*“How do I know what I think until I see what I say?”*

E.M. Forster

### Writing as Iterative

If we write in a more exploratory vein, we will need to make a substantial commitment to revision.

Committing to extensive revision requires ...

- that we invest **time**
- that we learn **strategies**

### Writing as Audience-Driven

Engaging in extensive revision necessitates that we understand the needs of the reader.

Those needs must be understood at both a **macro** and a **micro** level:

- **Genre conventions:** The broad types of writing you will need to produce
- **Writing patterns:** The optimal organization of sentences and paragraphs

“We write the first draft for ourselves; the drafts thereafter increasingly for the reader.”

Joseph M. Williams, *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*, Third Edition (Pearson Longman, 2009), p. x

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## Revision as a Complex Process

Revision is the active **reading**, **rearranging**, and **reconstructing** of your work.

Because this task is so complex, we all need a revision **process** that allows us to work through a draft in stages, concentrating on a different issue each time.

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## Revision as a Systematic Process

Go big

Go small

Go through

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## Building a Revision Process

Revision Stage	Goal
Drafting: Clarifying Intent	A draft that makes enough sense to allow structural revision
First Draft: Tackling Structure	A coherent draft
Next Draft: Tackling Sentences	A coherent draft + effective sentences
Next Draft: Tackling Movement	A coherent draft + effective sentences + good flow
Next Draft: Tackling Technicalities	A coherent draft + effective sentences + good flow + overall consistency
Final Draft: Letting Go	A submitted piece of writing

## Building a Revision Process

Revision Stage	Goal
Drafting: Clarifying Intent	<p><i>A draft that makes enough sense to allow structural revision</i></p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <p>Blocking out regular times during drafting to clarify intent</p> <p>Using a <i>for-your-eyes-only</i> font to narrate ongoing concerns</p>

## Building a Revision Process

Revision Stage	Goal
First Draft: Tackling Structure	<p><i>A coherent draft</i></p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <p>Working with a full draft</p> <p>Letting time elapse</p> <p>Using reverse outlines</p>

## Using Reverse Outlines

1. Number your paragraphs.
2. Identify the topic of each paragraph.
3. Arrange these topics in an outline.
4. Analyze this outline, assessing the **logic** (where elements have been placed in relation to one another) and the **proportion** (how much space is being devoted to each element).
5. Use this analysis to create a revised outline.
6. Use this revised outline to reorganize your text.
7. Return to your paragraphs to do an initial check for topic sentences and cohesion.

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## Building a Revision Process

Revision Stage	Goal
<b>Next Draft:</b> Tackling Sentences	<p><i>A coherent draft + effective sentences</i></p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging physically with your text</li> <li>Checking the beginnings of sentences</li> <li>Highlighting sentence structure</li> <li>Thinking about little words</li> <li>Lessening attachment</li> <li>Recognizing your own patterns</li> </ul>

## Building a Revision Process

Revision Stage	Goal
<b>Next Draft:</b> Tackling Movement	<p><i>A coherent draft + effective sentences + good flow</i></p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Checking for orienting-informing pattern</li> <li>Evaluating the presentation of lists</li> <li>Balancing long and short sentences</li> <li>Assessing signposting</li> </ul>

## Building a Revision Process


Revision Stage	Goal
<b>Next Draft:</b> Tackling Technicalities	<p><i>A coherent draft + effective sentences + good flow + overall consistency</i></p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distinguishing between revision and proofreading</li> <li>Finding ways to focus on technicalities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>letting time elapse</li> <li>reading aloud</li> <li>treating material out of order</li> <li>stopping at the end of every paragraphs</li> <li>using a ruler</li> <li>searching for one element at a time</li> </ul> </li> <li>Consulting your document-specific style sheet</li> </ul>

## Building a Revision Process

Revision Stage	Goal
<b>Final Draft:</b> Letting Go	<p><i>A submitted piece of writing</i></p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accepting the anxiety associated with sharing writing</li> <li>Being aware of diminishing returns</li> <li>Embracing the risks and rewards of making your work public</li> </ul>

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THRIVING AS A  
GRADUATE WRITER

Principles, Strategies, and Habits  
for Effective Academic Writing

Rachael Cayley

[https://www.press.umich.edu/11664964/thriving\\_as\\_a\\_graduate\\_writer](https://www.press.umich.edu/11664964/thriving_as_a_graduate_writer)

## Related Posts

For more detail, visit my blog: <https://explorationsofstyle.com/>

Three Key Writing Principles:

- Using Writing to Clarify Your Own Thinking
- Committing to Extensive Revision
- Understanding the Needs of Your Reader

Five Key Writing Strategies:

- Reverse Outlines
- Paragraphs
- Sentences
- Transitions
- Metadiscourse

**The Craft of Revision:**

<https://explorationsofstyle.com/2014/12/18/the-craft-of-revision/>

## Books on Academic Writing

Howard S. Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists* (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph Williams, *The Craft of Research* (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Claire Kehrwald Cook, *Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing* (Houghton Mifflin, 1985).

Eric Hayot, *The Elements of Academic Style* (Columbia University Press, 2014).

Stephen B. Heard, *The Scientist's Guide to Writing* (Princeton University Press, 2022).

Inger Mewburn, Katherine Firth, and Shaun Lehmann, *How To Fix Your Academic Writing Trouble* (Open University Press, 2019).

Pat Thomson and Barbara Kamler, *Detox Your Writing* (Routledge, 2016).

Joseph M. Williams, *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*, Third Edition (Pearson Longman, 2009).

## Online Resources

**Doctoral Writing SIG:**

[www.doctoralwriting.wordpress.com](http://www.doctoralwriting.wordpress.com)

**Writing for Research:**

[www.medium.com/@write4research](http://www.medium.com/@write4research)

**Patter:**

[www.patthomson.net](http://www.patthomson.net)

**Research Degree Insiders:**

[www.researchinsiders.blog](http://www.researchinsiders.blog)

**The Thesis Whisperer:**

[www.thesiswhisperer.com](http://www.thesiswhisperer.com)