

## re-writing

Rewriting is what you do when there's problems with your draft and you need to fix it. Before you even think of editing or polishing, make sure that the draft you have is right. This is much more important than editing. Rewriting a paper doesn't mean you've done anything wrong, it means you're doing it right! Working over ideas again and again is the best way to get them clear in your mind. Rewrite as many times as you have time, or until you're satisfied that your paper says exactly what you want it to say.

Review the instructions for pre-writing and writing, as well as the ideas that you come up with through those two steps. Just going over the ideas again will improve your presentation and you'll probably find the paper flows much better this time. Remember that your drafts are not carved in stone. You should be perfectly willing to cast aside any draft and do the whole thing over. Your writing will improve and the process will actually get easier

Introductions and conclusions should be regarded as particularly disposable, so you should never spend much time on them until the polishing stage.

Fix the BIGGEST problems and ignore the little ones. After meeting with your professor, you should have a melange of critical comments. Some will be scrawled in the margins and some will be written at the end of the paper. The ones at the end are usually more important than the others. There's a systematic method for dealing with instructor comments. First, make a list of the most important ones. (These are usually the ones that make you feel helpless and confused.) This will include all at the end of the paper and maybe some of the marginal ones. If any comment seems particularly serious (or mysterious) you can put it on a RESPONSE SHEET and translate it into your own words, with your own comments. (This you can take back to your professor for more help.) Next, prioritize the professor's comments, and address them in decreasing order of importance. Fixing an important problem might also make a minor problem disappear. Take the most important problem and decide what you really need to do to fix it. This could range from something minor, like changing the order of your paragraphs to a major fix, which might send you all the way back to prewriting. Only when you've fixed all the big problems should you start looking for the little one's.

Do more prewriting, as necessary. Doing more prewriting might seem like taking a step back, but it's actually a step forward. Once you've done it you understand your subject a lot better. If you don't do the additional prewriting, the danger is you won't understand the problem well enough to fix it.

If your thesis was grossly wrong, you can reverse it. If your attack on someone else's idea turns out to be misguided, you can turn your paper into one defending the other's idea against your own attack! Instead of saying "soandso is wrong because \_\_\_\_\_" your paper can begin "soandso could be attacked on the basis of \_\_\_\_\_ but I will show that this attack fails because \_\_\_\_\_"

If you can't fix the problem, try to figure out why you can't fix it. When everything else just isn't working, spend a halfhour or so just trying to put the problem into words. Sometimes just organizing your thoughts can get you moving again. There are two kinds of problems, writing problems and cognitive problems. Cognitive problems are more serious and more difficult to fix than writing problems, which are just difficulties in organizing and expressing your ideas. Cognitive problems are problems with your ideas themselves. Considering that the basic definition of a cognitive problem is "having a wrong idea and thinking it's right," merely recognizing that you have a cognitive problem is a major victory in itself. If you have one it will be difficult, confusing and frustrating to work out what it is. The best advice I can give you is to write the problem out as clearly as you can manage, and take it, with the rest of your notes, to your professor.