

## post-writing

Post writing is what you do after you have all the ideas in your paper sorted out properly. The aim here is to make your paper as clear and easy to read as possible, not to correct every grammatical, punctuation and spelling error. Only post write if you have time left after everything else. Professors grade you on how well you do philosophy, not literary style. NEVER turn in work late because you want to edit or polish.

Read your paper aloud all the way through, and listen to yourself as you do it. READING ALOUD can really help your writing. You can read aloud to yourself, to an audience or even to your cat. If something sounds awkward or mysterious when you read it aloud, then it probably reads awkward or mysterious as well. The wording you should use in your paper is the same wording you would use to explain your ideas in a conversation with a reasonably intelligent but uninformed fellow student.

Have another student read your paper and tell you what she thinks it means. Remember that the other student may not understand the topic as well as you do. If you've done your research right, you will understand this topic better than any other student in the class. Thus if she tells you something's a problem, it might be her problem, not yours. The point is to see what your paper looks like to someone who's not yet familiar with the topic. If this is her first introduction to the topic, she won't have any preconceived ideas and will have to rely on what you've written. If she reads the paper and then tells you that it means something other than what you wanted it to say, then you may have to rewrite parts to rule out erroneous interpretations. If you're happy with most of the paper, but you're unsure about a paragraph here and there, have someone read those paragraphs and rewrite them in their own words. If what she says is what you meant, then you're probably okay. If not, think of a way to clarify that paragraph.

Only edit or polish when your paper says exactly what you think it should say. EDITING, as far as I'm concerned, means making it clear. POLISHING, to me, means making your prose as pleasant to read as possible. Grammar, punctuation and spelling errors can make your paper difficult to understand and hard to read, so you should find and correct what you can. Complicated sentences can have the same effect, so shorten and simplify where you can.

Make a list of your writing problems and develop strategies to overcome them. This won't help you make the paper you're working on now any better. It will make it easier to get a good grade on your next paper. It will also make writing easier in future classes.