

# Revision & Editing

nerdylittlebirdie.com  
Teen Essay Guide

Revision is a big stage. Don't be surprised if you spend more time here than drafting the original essay. **Revision** is about revising the ideas and information, not grammar or spelling yet. If a grammar mistake interferes with clarity and meaning, go ahead and fix it. Otherwise hold off on grammar corrections until revision is over.

ALLOW PLENTY OF TIME FOR REVISIONS! I don't do all of these revisions in a day or two. We take several days to revise. I mostly approach it a paragraph at a time so I don't overwhelm my teens and have them think their entire essay is crap because of the number of revisions. Steady wins the race.

## Step 1 - Parent reads about revising and editing

- Read the following BW blog posts before reading your teen's draft.
  - [Revision is Not Editing](#)
  - [Revision](#)
  - [Writing your Revision Feedback](#)
- **Resources from The Writer's Jungle Chapter 7.**

Yes, that chapter talks mostly about revising a freewrite, not an essay's first draft, but many of the ideas still apply, such as...

  - "Start with one thing" section, page 82. At the essay level, my initial one thing is **clarity of thought**.
  - Four Principles of Revision (pages 83-85). Main idea = paragraph topic. Principle #2 addresses that clarity of thought.
  - Snip & Pin advice (page 86) still works with teens.
  - Mediocre reporting (page 87) explains how to expand a weak or vague topic paragraph.
  - Awkward phrasing - again, works on achieving that clarity of thought.
- Help for High School evaluation rubric pages 157-159 for guidance on what to look for.

## **Step 2 - Student reads the essay aloud to themselves and makes corrections they find.**

**See Steps 1-2 in Teen Guide.**

This step helps train your teen to edit their own papers. Don't offer suggestions yet. Let your teen's words & voice come through still. You'll help in the next steps.

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## **Step 3 - Parent then reads & marks areas for revision**

- **Take 24 hours between reading and drafting feedback.**
  - I'm more objective and mistakes/problems don't seem as personal after a night's sleep. So then, where to start after that 24 hours?
- **Find what's good in the rough draft.** This is the first priority. A good rule of thumb is two positive comments for every correction you note.
  - You must find and note what's good/right about the essay. Easier said than done when you can't help but see the glaring (to you) grammar mistakes, clunky paragraphs and underdeveloped ideas. [Bespoke ELA Classroom](#) offers a freebie pdf of positive feedback comments if you subscribe to her newsletter. Click on her FREEBIES box.

Whether we start with my teens closely analyzing their paragraphs or we collaborate over one of the other techniques depends on two things: 1) the strength or weakness of the paragraph when it arrives on my "desk" and 2) whether they're a beginning essay writer or more experienced.

If it's a weak paragraph or they're a beginner, we may do a few techniques together, then I have them do the colored-coded highlighter analysis below. If they're more experienced, I might start with the color-coded revision instead.

Read through the following section and decide which techniques you want to start with. **You do not have to use them all.** Just pick a couple that work for you.

## • Clarity of Thought

- Once you've noted the good parts in the essay, focus on clarity of thought. Is their content clear in a way someone can follow their point or train of thought?
- Are their supporting sentences (the particulars) relevant to their paragraph topic?
- Does it communicate well to the reader? How do we coach that? Listed below are some techniques that worked for us. Pick and chose; I don't do them all every time.
  - Keep body paragraph material related to the essay topic. For example, if they're writing about why participation trophies are bad for kids, don't go into the parents' internal motivations for wanting participation trophies handed out. Keep the focus on what's happening to the kids.
  - Do a round of snip and pin revision with your teen. See TWJ page 86. I have a [blog post](#) on how I do this with my teens.
  - Include an example and/or explanation to make the point clear to the reader.
  - Ask your teen what more the reader might want or need to know. What additional details would be important to understand the issue? Jot down their answer as they said it, give it to them to revise.
  - If you read a sentence that confuses you, ask your teen what they meant by it. What is their reasoning? Jot down their answer as they said it, give it to them to revise.
  - **H4HS pages 139-140** covers expanding body paragraphs that don't have enough meat to them. Read what it has to say about the components needed in body paragraphs: quotes, paraphrase, examples, etc. Can any of those be added to the paragraph to flesh it out?

## • Student Analysis

### • COLOR-CODED HIGHLIGHTER ANALYSIS

Here is how I help my teens analyze *for themselves* how their paragraph(s) is fleshing out. (See Step 3 in Teen Guide.)

1. Grab three highlighters, each a different color. Have your teen mark as described...
2. Use one color to highlight the topic sentence - the main point of the paragraph).
3. Use a second color to highlight supporting evidence - the paraphrased/ summarized information, quotes, statistics, etc. Any evidence that should be cited, highlight it in the second color.

4. Use a third color to highlight their own commentary, analysis or explanation of the evidence. These are their words, not the paraphrased or summarized words of others.
5. How does the paragraph look?
  - Do the highlighted colors demonstrate a good balance of information in the paragraph: a clear topic, evidence, and student commentary?
  - Is there sufficient evidence but not enough commentary/explanation?
  - Enough commentary but not enough cited evidence?
  - Is the paragraph topic missing?
  - It's all okay! Now is the time to fix the weak areas.

**If a paragraph lacked enough evidence**, they may need to quickly do additional research to fill out that paragraph. Do that before moving on with the rest of revision.

**If it lacked enough student commentary and/or analysis**, these resources can help:

- Pull their original freewrite from before researching. It may have sentences they can use as commentary.
- Expand the paragraph by including examples or explanations in their own words.
- Pull out the [Analyzing Quotes and Facts booklet](#) and follow the steps for clarifying and explaining cited evidence.
  - The “more ways to clarify/explain” pages in the booklet are helpful to expand and add their own insights/interpretation/application of the research they cited.
  - The Analysis Practice: Direct Quotes graphic organizer that comes with the Analyzing Quotes & Facts booklet may help too.
- They Say/I Say book, pages 43-51. Pay particular attention to pages 45-49. The sentence templates can be a jumping off point for their own analysis.
- They Say/I Say book, pages 53-65. These pages cover more sophisticated commentaries, such as disagreeing with the evidence, agreeing but with a difference, agreeing and disagreeing simultaneously, and being undecided. If they're more experienced and ready for that level, go for it.

Go through each body paragraph and add in any new research and/or commentary needed to the draft. Print the revised draft.

## Step 4 - Final Revisions

Now that the ideas flow together well and you're happy with the overall essay structure, make sure to...

- **Add transition words/sentences as needed.**
  - In the paragraphs, where do they need to better connect their ideas?
  - H4HS pages 139-142 discusses transitions. Page 141 has specific suggestions for transition phrases.
  - The [MENSA transition words print out](#) is a thorough list.
  - Here is a [free TpT download](#) for transition words.
- **Vary the way the sentences open.**
- **Check word choice**
  - See the PEN pages from The Writer's Jungle, pages 137-140
  - UNC Writing Center's [Writing Concisely page](#)
  - [Hemingway online editor](#)
  - Swap out weak verbs for stronger ones. Here is [a website with helpful examples](#), especially how to avoid 'to be' verbs. Download a pdf version through the site.
  - Watch for sentences that begin with "There are/is," "There was/were," or "It is/was." See if you can strike them out of the sentence.
  - If there is energy left, you can check out The Writer's Jungle Top 10 Writing Elements in chapter 10 and see if you can use any of those in the essay.
- **Check for plagiarism**
  - Make sure all paraphrased/summarized evidence is cited
  - Is it in your voice and your own words?
  - Use an online checker like [Turn It In](#) to be sure.
- **Create a Works Cited page**
  - [a free MLA student mini handbook](#)
  - sign up for [Presto Plan's 10 free ELA downloads](#) and one she sends is MLA task cards.

## EDITING

Now is the time to clean up grammar. Use your favorite grammar guide to help out.

**PRINT THE FINAL DRAFT!**

**NOW CELEBRATE!**