

## Editing—Addressing Paragraph- and Sentence-Level Issues

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### *The Revision Process—Last Stage of the Writing Process*

1. **Focus on global issues first**—those issues that are important to the overall essay:
  - Does the draft achieve its purpose and is it appropriate for the audience?
  - Does the thesis present the essay’s central claim and provide direction for the essay? Are all ideas related to the thesis?
  - Is the draft organized in a logical way and does it follow the thesis?
  - Does the draft provide adequate support and evidence? Have all sources been documented appropriately with in-text citations and a list of sources at the end (Works Cited/References)?
  
2. **Move to more local issues:**
  - **Paragraph-level Issues:** Are ideas organized into paragraphs effectively?
    - **Unity:** A topic sentence that identifies the main idea of the paragraph? All ideas in the paragraph relate to and develop the topic sentence?
    - **Coherence:** Clear connections among the ideas within the paragraph?
    - **Completeness:** Enough detail to develop the idea in the topic sentence?
  
  - **Sentence-level Issues:**
    - **Clarity:** Does the writer present ideas in clear and readable sentences?
    - **Coherence:** Does the writer connect ideas effectively using appropriate transitions?
    - **Conciseness:** Could the writer use fewer words to present ideas and avoid unnecessary words or repetition?
    - **Correctness:** Does the draft contain mechanical or grammatical issues that need to be corrected—punctuation, agreement, parallelism, point of view, verb tense, spelling, and usage?

**Sample Paragraph:** Read and evaluate the following paragraph, focusing on paragraph- and sentence-level issues. Identify where the paragraph needs to be revised to improve its effectiveness.

Plagiarism is increasing, this is a problem. The Internet seemed to be playing a roll. Due to this fact, something needs to be done. Several ideas might work. One idea would be for teachers to make writing assignments very specific, and thus very hard to plagiarize. You would not be able to do an assignment by going to the internet and copying and pasting something into a paper, and then handing it in. In fact, I don’t even think that many students really understand what plagiarism is. “We need to do more to help students understand what plagiarism is and why they must not plagiarize.” (Jones 30). One teacher said this in response to a question about what teachers can do to deal with increasing amounts of plagiarism. This provides evidence that teachers should do more to help solve the problem of plagiarism. Students may not know what plagiarism even is. One student accused of plagiarizing in his college writing course said this. “I have plagiarized every paper I ever wrote during junior high and high school. I really didn’t think there was anything wrong with it.” (Smith 22) Teachers could do more to help one understand what plagiarism is.

**Revised Paragraph**—Note the changes that have been made to improve the quality of the paragraph:

Plagiarism is increasing, and teachers must do more to combat this increase. One approach is for teachers to educate students more fully about what plagiarism is. Carol Jones, an experienced high school English teacher, believes that teachers should “help students understand what plagiarism is and why they must not plagiarize” (30). Such an approach could have helped a college student enrolled in a writing course who had been charged with plagiarism, but claimed he did not know that he had done anything wrong: “I have plagiarized every paper I ever wrote during junior high and high school. I really didn’t think there was anything wrong with it” (qtd. in Smith 22). In addition to providing more instruction about plagiarism, teachers can also design writing assignments that are unique to a class, making it difficult for students to find anything online that would match the assignment. This has worked well in a local school district where teachers developed writing assignments that involve issues related to the individual schools and that require students to do individual work and to report on that work in order to complete an assignment (Jackson 43-44). Such approaches will help solve the increasing problem of plagiarism.

### **Sentence Types, Punctuation Guidelines, and Grammatical Issues**

**IC** = An independent clause is a group of words that has a subject and predicate and can stand alone as a separate sentence.

**DC**= A dependent clause is a group of words that cannot stand alone as a separate sentence but must be connected to an independent clause (or main clause) to be a complete sentence.

- *After we finish going through these guidelines, we will revise some sample sentences.*  
DC IC

**IC . IC.** This is an independent clause. It is a group of words that can stand alone as a sentence.

**IC ; IC.** This is an independent clause; it can stand alone as a separate sentence.

**IC , and IC.** This is an independent clause, and it can stand alone as a separate sentence.

**IC; thus, IC.** A dependent clause cannot stand alone as a separate sentence; thus, it depends on other words to be a complete sentence.

**IC: List/** Students struggle with three main issues in their writing: Developing a thesis that presents their central claim, connecting all ideas and paragraphs back to that thesis, and providing sufficient evidence to support that claim.

**Quotation** Erin Black, an experienced high school teacher, provided a general assessment of her students’ writing: “Students today know how to write a five-paragraph essay, but struggle when having to write longer researched-based essays” (qtd. in Smith 45).

**DC, IC.** After focusing on global revisions, we then moved to making local revisions.

**Noun/Pronoun Agreement:** A pronoun should agree in gender and number with its antecedent.

- **Students** should turn **their** papers in at the beginning of class.

**Consistent Point of View:** Maintain a consistent point of view within a piece of writing unless you have a good reason to change it.

- **You** should read through the guidelines carefully and then correct the sample sentences.

**Parallel Structure:** Put parallel content in parallel form; make items in a list or series parallel.

- Students struggle with **thesis sentences**, **paragraph development**, and **correctness issues**.

## Revision Worksheet—Local Issues

**Correct grammatical, punctuation, and usage errors in the following sentences.**

1. When students revise their papers he or she often make only a few local revisions, and fail to focus on the necessary global revisions.
2. In order to improve the quality of your paper one must first make global revisions and then you should make local ones.
3. Run on sentences and comma splices are very common errors in student's papers. They are problems in which students struggle because they have difficulty recognizing them and than correcting them.
4. Some writers avoid using punctuation in which they are not comfortable, however this is like a golfer using only two clubs during around of golf.
5. Most people are familiar with Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous statement about fear. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself (qtd. in Smith 14)."
6. Students often have difficulty keeping up in class because he or she works full time and goes to school full time. They also struggle because we all know that you also need to have a social life.
7. During our discussion of sentence fragments some students were texting while others were studying for there math test.
8. Punctuating sentences correctly is important for many reasons. Although correct punctuation does not guarantee that you will receive a good grade on a writing assignment.
9. Globalization was increasing around the world. One affect of globalization was outsourcing. This is when jobs are sent to another country to be done. The United States is loosing jobs to outsourcing. We must due something to stop jobs from being outsourced.
10. The main problems in students papers are; failing to provide enough evidence, poorly worded thesis, not providing good topic sentences, and lack of unity. Although, not all students struggle in these areas.