Checklist for Revising

As you revise your draft, you'll want to ask yourself the following important questions for success in writing the academic essay. Read through the entire checklist.

✓ What is my motive for writing this essay? That is, does my essay establish a context for why readers might want to read my essay, why my thesis is worth arguing? Have I identified (in the visual and written texts I am writing about) a problem, conflict, contradiction, difficulty, dilemma, over-simplification, undeveloped ground, or violated expectation that my essay will explain, correct, or clarify?

✓ Do I have a precise, arguable claim? Can I make my thesis clearer to my readers? Is my thesis provable in 3-4 pages?

✓ Does my introduction include tactics to engage my readers while directly and concisely leading toward my thesis?

✓ Do I orient my readers with bits of information, explanation, and summary about the text(s) at hand early on in my essay?

✓ Does my essay prove my thesis with substantial analytical claims (evidence drawn from the text(s)), thus effectively structuring my argument?

✓ Does each of my paragraphs focus on one major analytical claim (a main idea) that advances my thesis?

✓ Does each of my supporting paragraphs state its major analytical claim with a clear topic sentence?

✓ Does each of my topic sentences refer back to the thesis? That is, does it pick up on key concepts or terms I used in defining my thesis so that my readers see clearly how my supporting paragraphs advance the thesis?

✓ Do I develop each paragraph’s major analytical claim with explanations and evidence? Do I use enough evidence (particularly quotations from the written text or descriptions of the visual text) to show that my claims are true? Do I analyze all my evidence (or do I just drop quotations in)? Do I quote too much, drowning out my own voice with references to my sources that I do not have time or space to substantiate?

✓ Do all my sentences in a paragraph follow one another logically and support the topic sentence?
✓ Do I effectively announce my quotations to show my readers how the quotations from my text and/or sources are relevant to the particular claim(s) I am making? See Gordon Harvey’s *Writing with Sources* for help.

✓ Do I make smooth, logical transitions from one paragraph to another? That is, are all my supporting ideas (paragraphs) in logical order and have I signaled the connections between them with transition words or phrases?

✓ Do I conclude my essay powerfully, not simply re-hashing my thesis but rather showing how my thesis has evolved through my evidence and returning to what motivated me to write about my topic in the first place?

✓ Do I have clearly written prose?

✓ Have I ensured that my sentences are grammatically correct (no subject-verb disagreements, no pronoun errors, no fragments or comma splices)? Have I used *Rules for Writers* as a reference for any problems I have?

✓ Have I ensured that my punctuation and spelling are correct? Do I have page numbers on my pages?

✓ Have I stapled both the marked-up draft and revision separately and attached all relevant material (pre-writing, drafts, cover letters, etc) with a paper clip or secured them in a folder or envelope?

✓ Have I gone to the Writing Center?

✓ Do I LIKE this essay?