

EFFECTIVE ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCING FOR SCAFFOLDING LEARNING SUPPLEMENT THREE: HOW TO WRITE A REVISION PLAN

The purpose of revision plans is to re-visit your work, to think through what you're trying to accomplish, how well you've done that so far, and where you still need to make adjustments. How can you make your argument stronger? Revision plans ask you to articulate *substantive* alterations that will improve your argument and specifically address how you will make them. Instead of just starting at the beginning of the essay and racing through to make changes that occur to you in the moment, or focusing only on the places where your instructor has made a comment, you need to decide ahead of time which kinds of changes are most important for your project, prioritize them, and approach them in that order.

Remember, "revision" is *not editing*. When you're thinking about "proofreading" or "correcting," you're not thinking about revision, you're thinking about editing. Editing takes place separately, *as the final act*, after revision, just before submitting the essay. Revision is *substantive*. It involves clarifying your ideas by moving things around, adding material, and cutting. Your job in a revision plan is to decide specifically what you need to add, cut or move. And you need to be specific about your tasks.

Here is a bad revision plan:

1. Revise my thesis
2. Develop my solution
3. Add more examples
4. Correct my citations
5. Cut out some unneeded material
6. Fix grammar

This list is no good. Anyone could write out these tasks about any paper. They do not describe specific actions, do not refer to a specific essay, and do not address *how* the writer will make the changes.

An effective revision plan is specific. It needs to demonstrate that you are making sound, controlled revision choices.

Here is a good revision plan:

1. Revise my thesis: Right now, my thesis argues an issue, that not recycling is immoral. Since this is a proposal, I need to make the topic a problem to be solved rather than an issue to be argued. Here's what I'm thinking: "In order to solve the problem of consumer waste, consumers should be given incentives to recycle . . .".

2. My solution is clear, "Consumers need to be given incentives like tax breaks," but the details need work. How can I make this solution happen? How can legislators be convinced? What kind of tax breaks am I talking about? How would the breaks be applied (no pun intended)?

3. I need to give more examples of how the problem has been solved in the past, and failed. I admit I need more focused research on the history of the problem. Some resources I might consult this time around are...

4. My in-text citations seem to include years of publication, which aren't needed, and I need to remove author's last names from citation markers if I have the author's names in the signal phrases, and then put the article titles in the citation markers instead. I also need to set off a couple of long quotes (of more than four lines). Beyond following convention, these kinds of changes will help my argument because...

5. I have a whole section after the problem that repeats a lot of the information in the intro. It defines the problem more as the conclusion of the essay, but I already defined the problem, so I think I can cut most of this material. I was just padding space to meet the page count requirement, but I'll meet the requirements by adding in good, purposeful information to develop the solution by adding more details to my solution and giving more examples alternative solutions (see 2 and 3 above).

6. [There would be no "correct grammar" statement; that's a given for everyone! And fixing grammar and spelling and punctuation should take place AFTER you revise. Remember, PROOFREADING IS NOT REVISION.]

To begin constructing your revision plan:

1. Synthesize the comments you've received from your peers and from me.
2. Note the most recurring comments first, issues that most people reviewers agree on. Consider how you can address those concerns in your own voice. Which advice will you take, and why? How will you incorporate it?
3. Then make a list of the kinds of less frequent comments, or where people disagreed. As you consider them, think about your goals for your project. Which advice will you take, and why? How will you incorporate it? Which advice, after careful consideration, have you decided you need to alter before you adopt it? How and why?

Do not include grammar, spelling or punctuation as part of the revision plan -- those considerations are important during the proofreading stage, which should occur after you revise.

And once you've completed your revision plan, revise! Use it as your map.