

Revision Checklist

Read what you wrote out loud. (If possible also have a friend read it.) Listen and look for better ways to make your ideas clear. Ask yourself as you read each sentence and paragraph:

1. Is what I wrote clear and easy to understand, or could it confuse some readers?
2. Are the transitions between ideas and paragraphs clear? Can readers understand how each idea connects to the next and to the whole essay?
3. Does each paragraph have one main idea, and support the main idea of the whole?
4. Do I give enough examples and evidence to explain each idea and to support each point I make?
5. Are there unnecessary words or phrases I could cut to make this briefer and easier to read?
6. Is my use of verb tenses correct and consistent? (Changing tenses too often is confusing.) Can the reader easily tell what happened in the past, what is happening now, and what hasn't happened yet?
7. Is there a better way to say this? Usually specific words are better than general ones, and variety is better than constant repetition. For example, instead of repeating "said" whenever you mention someone talking, ask yourself HOW they spoke. "She mumbled," "they urged," "Bill asked," "Sue answered," "John warned," "Mary advised."

Specific verbs are also usually better (when possible) than general verbs with an adverb. Instead of "Anne spoke softly" you could write "Anne whispered;" instead of "Bill said jokingly," try "Bill joked." Instead of "he walked into the room" you can write "he raced," "he hurried," "he strolled," "he stumbled," etc.

Proofreading Checklist

After you have revised your work, proofread it. Look for errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. Ask yourself:

Spelling & Capitalization:

- Is my spelling correct? (Re-read carefully in addition to using a spell check program. A program cannot recognize a wrong word like 'to' instead of 'too' or 'there' for 'their'.)
- Did I capitalize all proper names (names of specific people, places, or things: Jim, Mrs. Smith, Paris, Parisians, Mexico, Mexicans, North America? Remember that adjectives made from proper nouns are also capitalized: Mexican cooking or Parisian hotels, etc.)

Punctuation:

- Did I start each sentence with a capital and end it with either a period (.), a question mark (?), or (if needed) an exclamation mark (!)?
- (Is there a comma after each item in a list? Example: “apples, peaches, pears, and bananas.”)
- Did I connect independent clauses with either A) a comma and a conjunction (‘and’, ‘or’, or ‘but’) OR B) a semicolon but no conjunction?
> Correct: “I like peaches, but I dislike plums.” “I like peaches; I dislike plums.”
> Incorrect: ~~“I like peaches, I dislike plums.”~~ ~~“I like peaches I dislike plums.”~~
- Did I put a comma after a dependent clause that started a sentence? (Even though I like peaches, I don’t like plums.)

Grammar:

- Does each sentence have at least one subject and one verb?
- Do the subject and the verb agree?
 - >Plural subjects need plural verbs (not ending in ‘-s’): “we **see**,” “Bill and I **are** teachers,” “they **listen**,” “children **play**,” “trees **grow**,” etc.
 - >Third person singular subjects (not “I” or “you”) need singular verbs (that *will* end in ‘-s’ in the present tense): “Bill **is** a teacher,” “he **listens**,” “she **sees**,” “your child **plays** well with others,” “A well-watered pine tree **grows** fast.”
 - >Remember the verb must agree with the *subject*, not with another noun. For example, “The branches of the tree **are** long.” The subject is ‘the branches.’ ‘Of the tree’ just describes *which* branches the author is talking about. **Nouns following a preposition are not the subject, even if they are next to the verb.**
- Is every pronoun reference clear? (When I write ‘he,’ ‘she,’ or ‘they,’ will my reader be sure who I’m talking about? If I write ‘it,’ will the reader know what thing or idea I’m referring to?)
- Did I correct sentence fragments (incomplete thoughts, like a dependent clause by itself (“When he went to the store...” or “The girl, who was very pretty...”), or a subject without a verb (The boy and his friends...“)?
- Did I correct run-on sentences (complete, unconnected thoughts that should have been separate sentences)?

Compound and Complex Sentences

Compound sentences have two or more independent clauses. An independent clause is a clause (subject and verb) which could be a sentence by itself. Examples: “the boy won the spelling contest,” or “his friends had a party for him.” In compound sentences, independent clauses can be connected in two ways: 1) with a comma, then conjunction (‘and,’ ‘or,’ ‘so,’ or ‘but’), OR 2) with a semicolon (;) and no conjunction.

These are all correct compound sentences:

- “The boy won the spelling contest, and his friends had a party for him.”
- “The boy won the spelling contest, so his friends had a party for him.”
- “The boy won the spelling contest; his friends had a party for him.”
- “The boy won the spelling contest, but his friends did not have a party for him.”

This is an incorrect, run-on sentence: “The boy won the spelling contest, his friends had a party for him.”

Complex sentences combine a **dependent** clause with an independent one. A dependent clause *cannot be a complete sentence by itself*, because the thought is incomplete. It must be combined with an independent clause. Examples of dependent clauses (sentence fragments, if used by themselves):

- “when the boy won the spelling contest”
- “as soon as the boy won the spelling contest”
- “although the boy won the spelling contest”

If a dependent clause comes before the independent clause, put a comma between them.

Examples of correct complex sentences:

- “When the boy won the spelling contest, his friends had a party for him.”
- “The boy’s friends had a party for him when he won the spelling contest.” (Notice that there is no comma because the independent clause is first.)
- “Although the boy won the spelling contest, his friends did not have a party for him.”