The Ten Writing Priorities

Thesis/Message

Does the paper have a message? Is the message worth conveying? Is the message clear to the reader by the time he or she finishes reading the paper? Does every aspect of the paper relate to the main message? Does the paper have a purpose? Does the paper avoid leaving the reader asking, so What?

Audience

Are the point of view, format, word choice, tone, and style consistent with the needs and expectations of the audience?

Genre

Does the paper satisfy the conventions of its genre? Does it adhere to the unique qualities of a term paper, summary, review, research report, lab report, etc? Does the paper satisfy all of the requirements of the assignment-length, subject, use of sources, etc?

Support

Does the paper make clear distinctions between assertion, evidence, and analysis? Is there sufficient evidence? Is there a sufficient variety of support from categories such as facts, statistics, examples, anecdotes, quotations, illustrations, interviews, polls, etc.? Is the evidence persuasive? Is the evidence properly cited?

Organization

Is there an introduction, body, and conclusion? Are paragraphs cohesive? Do they have topic sentences? Are paragraphs ordered logically? Do transitions signal relationships behind ideas? Are all paragraphs important? Does the paper avoid redundancy?

Syntax

Do the sentences maintain correct grammatical structure, word order, and verb agreement? Are the paper's sentence structures varied?

Diction

Is the word choice appropriate for the audience, purpose, message, assignment, and rhetorical stance? Do the words convey meaning accurately and effectively? Is the style clear, authentic, graceful, and compelling?

Standard Usage

Does the paper use the correct word or phrase at the correct time? I.e., Is the correct homophone used (e.g. dear vs deer)? Does the language achieve a level of formality appropriate to the paper's genre and audience?

Spelling & Punctuation

Has the paper been carefully and successfully proofread for proper spelling and punctuation? Is the paper free from errors and typos?

Presentation

Is the paper neatly typed and printed in easy-to-read black ink? Does it feature proper page numbering, margins, and font? Is it presented cleanly and attractively?

Revision:

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Itis not a coincidence that vision is contained in the word *revision.* At this stage, your job is to see your paper as a whole and to make sure that every aspect of it fits within your vision for your paper. To get started, consider your MAP for your writing project:

What is your Message?   Who is your £1,udience?   And what is the .eurpose of this project?
(To inform, to persuade, to entertain, to express...?)

Then go through your paper and verify that each paragraph is supporting your purpose and message and that it is written with your specific audience in mind. Whenever you find elements that don't fit within your MAP, you need to either change them or cut them out entirely in order to avoid distracting or confusing your audience.

Be sure to also look for and fill any holes in your message and consider whether you might benefit from reorganizing. (The answer is almost certainly, yes!) Use some of the techniques below to help you make your MAP straightforward and detour free. The finish line is in sight!

Revision Techniques:

REVISION TECHNIQUES

Reverse Outlining I Look at each paragraph individually. Ask yourself, "What am I doing in this paragraph?" Then briefly write the answer in the margin or on a separate piece of paper. Once you've reverse-outlined the whole paper, look for holes, repetitions, and illogical organization, and make sure each paragraph corresponds with your MAP.

Scissors Technique I Cut up your paper so that each paragraph is separate. Lay the paragraphs out on a table and move them around until you find continuity. You can also try mixing them up and asking a friend to put them back in order. If your topic sentences and transitions are solid, your friend should be able to reconstruct your paper.

Zoom Way Out I In your word processor, change your view so that you can see all or most of your pages at once. Even if you can't read the text anymore, you will see headings, paragraph breaks, block quotes, etc. From this perspective you can get a feel for your paper's balance. To make this technique even more useful, try using the highlighter function to color-code you paper by premise or idea before zooming out.

Editing
While editing, the primary aim is to assess how the writing sounds and figure out how to make it sound better at the sentence level. For academic audiences, especially, the goal is writing that sounds smooth and elegant rather than laborious.

Again, editing can happen at any point in the writing process, but try to wait until your paragraphs are in place in order to avoid stifling your creativity.

Editing Techniques
Print & Read Aloud
Print your paper out and read it aloud to yourself or to a friend. Or have a friend read to you! What better way to hear how your paper sounds? As you read through, mark directly on the page. When you transfer your edits to your typed document, you'll have yet another chance to edit. In a nutshell, read it out loud, mark it up, edit, sleep on it… Do it again!

More Editing Techniques
Highlight sentences by length
Varying your sentence length is a great way to smooth your prose. If you have too many short sentences, your paper will be choppy and stilted. Conversl, if you have a plethora of long sentences in yellow and your short sentences in blue. Spread your pages out in front of you, look at the breakdown, and adjust.

Eliminate Vagueness & Wordiness
Try to eliminate vague or unnecessary words and phrases from your writing all together. For instance, this, thing, there, it is, kind of, really, basically and certain can almost always be omitted. As you notice patterns in your writing you'd like to avoid, make a note. Periodically search your document for those words and phrases by pressing Ctrl + F or Command +F and then eliminate or replace what you find.

Proofreading
First see, then hear, then smell! When you are finally done prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, it is time to sniff out and fix your grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling mistakes.

Proofreading Techniques
Glossing: Begin with the last sentence of your essay. Read the sentence by itself. Look for spelling, punctuation, & grammar errors and fix them. Continue backward through your paper until you hit your title. This technique tricks your brain into seeing errors it might otherwise skim past.

Specific foci: Focus on a different priority each time you read through your paper (commas, homophone errors, documentation, etc). We're not as good at multitasking as we think. This technique takes time but is very effective.