

REVISION STRATEGY: HOCS TO LOCS¹

This handout addresses a situation you will undoubtedly encounter in your academic life: You finally completed your first draft. You lean back in your chair, take a deep breath, and realize you still have some time left before the paper is due. A Miracle!!

What, if anything, should you revise?

Based on how much time you have to revise a draft, it might prove helpful to use a system of Higher Order Concerns (HOCs), Middle Order Concerns (MOCs) and Lower Order Concerns (LOCs) to plan your revision strategy. If you have time to revise substantially, you will most likely want to evaluate the HOCs first: if something needs to change here, it could change everything lower in the hierarchy. For instance, there is little point in fiddling with commas in your thesis if the idea in your thesis statement is not working.

The roots of many LOCs tend to be in HOCs. An ineffective thesis statement or topic sentence, for example, often leads to incorrect organization and structure, which leads to poor use of evidence and unclear paragraph and sentence structure. How much time you have before the paper is due and what you consider most important at this juncture will influence how you proceed. If you have several hours (or days) to continue working on the paper, you could decide to spend most of your time on HOCs. If you have only a short time and feel your paper is in good shape from a HOC point of view, you could direct your attention to MOCs and/or LOCs. If you have only a short time but discover your argument is weak, you could spend your time strengthening your thesis statement and topic sentences. However you decide to proceed, if you hope to use your remaining time to best advantage, you do need to proceed strategically.

Please use the following list as a guide to decide how and what to revise, and create a revision plan.

Happy revising. 😊

HIGHER ORDER CONCERNS ARE CONCEPTUAL CHANGES (IDEAS)

These concerns take more time to address because when writers revise them, they change the content, meaning, structure, organization, and logic of the argument that effect the audience's reading and understanding of the essay.

High Order Concerns are:

- ✚ Focus: Thesis Statement and Topic Sentences
- ✚ Purpose and audience
- ✚ Evidence
- ✚ Development through Evidence and Analysis
- ✚ Essay and Paragraph Organization
- ✚ Framing: Introduction and Conclusion

MIDDLE ORDER CONCERNS ARE LEXICAL CHANGES, VOICE AND STYLE:

With middle order concerns writers look at their word choice, replacing words that are repetitious words with new ones, incorrect words with correct ones, and colloquial words with academic ones. At this point, writers rework sentences, moving them from unfocused and/or passive to focused and active, making certain sentences flow logically from one to the next without abrupt changes. Though writers' sentences communicate their ideas, they may lack flair, so writers revise their sentences making the language genuine and alive, creating a voice that holds the audience's attention.

¹ Writing Studio/Duke University. Duke University. Web. 4 February 2013.

LOWER ORDER CONCERNS: These are often the easiest to fix since the changes take less brainpower; however, they are often hard to identify if you have been working closely with the text for a long stretch of time. This kind of “cleaning up,” while important, is best done after a period of time away from the final draft, at the end of your writing process, after you have revised high and middle order concerns. Lower Order Concerns are mechanics, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.