depaul.edu/writing
The University Center for Writing-based Learning
the writing center
the writing fellows program
work shops
the collaborative for multilingual writing & research
outreach

Creating an Editing Game Plan

Sahi Padmanabhan & Lisa Parzefall

Goals

- To discuss different types of concerns that might come up in your writing

- To find different approaches that might help you while you are editing your papers

- To give you all tools that will help you moving forward in revising your writing

Some Questions for You

How do you approach editing?

How long do you usually allow yourself for revision? Why?

What issues in your own writing do you tend to critique the most?

the UCWbL

How might we approach editing?

From the University of Surrey's Writing Skills website:

"It may be tempting to work paragraph by paragraph, trying to perfect each one before attending to the next. This is, however, neither an efficient nor an effective method for editing a large document. Several of the processes, e.g.: maintaining a logical thread throughout, and identifying duplication require more of an overview to be taken, involving review at a chapter or thesis level, rather than at a sentence or paragraph level."

How might we approach editing?

What does that quote mean?

- Approach individual elements in the text
- Focus on global concerns over local concerns
- Could be more effective than focusing on one paragraph at a time

Let's talk a bit about how that might appear—and what some of these elements in the text might be.

the UCWbL

What should we prioritize?

- Global Concerns might be structural or organizational—think of how paragraphs are fitting together and how your argument is crafted overall

- Local Concerns are generally sentence-level concerns like grammar and punctuation.

the UCWbL

GLOBAL VERSUS LOCAL:
Which comes first?

Every draft is different, what should be prioritized will depend on your drafts.

Even though local concerns might be easier to pick out and fix, taking a look at the big picture is a good way to begin.

Sometimes, when you look at global concerns, some of those local concerns won't be issues anymore!

the UCWbL

Global Concerns

What are global concerns of a paper?
- What affects the work as a whole?
- What is your work aiming to accomplish? Is everything in your writing helping accomplish this goal?

A couple elements to think about:
- Purpose
- Organization

the UCWbL

Purpose

If a text isn't meeting its purpose, then looking at grammar won't change that. Ask yourself:

- What is the academic purpose of this work?
- How might a reader understand that purpose?
- Is that purpose consistent throughout?

Making small edits along the way is perfectly all right, but reading through your work while thinking about the purpose can help you pick out any global concerns you might have.

the UCWbL

Organization

- Every text is different, so don't worry about trying to fit the cookie cutter of an academic paper!
- How do your paragraphs fit together?
- How do your paragraphs organize your information?
- Why did you choose to organize your ideas this way?

the UCWbL

Strategies for Organization

- Try a reverse outline
  - Write an outline from what you already have written
  - Are your ideas in the right order?
  - Does this order convey your purpose?
  - Does each paragraph make sense in the context of your entire work?

the UCWbL

Local Concerns

What are local concerns of a paper?
- Local concerns are often sentence or paragraph level issues

A couple elements to think about:
- Structure
- Grammar (Proofreading)

Strategies for Structure

- Read the paper aloud
  - Does every sentence sound right?
  - Does every word sound like it's in the right place?
  - Does the order of sentences create a good flow?
  - Does each paragraph make sense on its own?
  - Does each sentence aid in the understanding of each paragraph?

the UCWbL

Proofreading vs. Editing

Proofreading

- Focuses on the local elements of your work
- Includes correcting spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.

Editing

- Focuses on the global elements of your work as well
- Often consists of revision rather than just small edits

the UCWbL

Proofreading

Proofreading advice:
- Focus on one type of error at a time
  - Punctuation, sentence structure, spelling, etc.
- Don't only rely on spell check
- Take your time
- Read on the sentence level
- Circle punctuation
- Read from end to beginning
- Develop a strategy

the UCWbL

Editing

Editing has different elements:

- Content
  - Have you included all the necessary information?
- Overall Structure
  - Does it flow logically?
- Clarity
- Style
- Citations
- Proofreading

Source: UNC Writing Center

Clarity

- Ask yourself questions
  - Have I explained necessary terms?
  - Have I assumed any knowledge?
- Get a friend!
  - Having someone else look at your writing can help you see areas that need clarification for other people, even if it is perfectly clear to you
  - The writing center can always help with this!

the UCWbL

Style & Citations

- Most citation styles also have style guides for your writing
- Make sure that you are following the style set out by whatever citation style you're using!

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_quotations.html

the UCWbL

Editing for Consistency

Inconsistency is often more noticeable than an error

Checking your consistency:
- Punctuation
- Verb tense
- Capitalization of certain words

the UCWbL

Strategies for Consistency

Consistency is often a tough thing to strategize for but here are some we have found are truly helpful:

- Highlighting
- Search & Replace
- Keyword List
- Word Usage Checks

the UCWbL

Editing for Length

Length is both a global and local concern

Global

- Length is part of your overall organization
- How long is this paper? How much time and space should you spend on each idea?
- How can you best break up ideas to convey your overall purpose?

Local

- How long should each individual sentence & paragraph be?

Strategies for Length

When you don't have enough words:
- Look at your paper section by section -- have you thoroughly explained everything?
- Where can you add more detail?

When you have too many words:
- Are there any sentences you can condense?
- Have you overused any filler words, like "that" or "very"? Ctrl + F

the UCWbL

Additional Strategies for Proofreading

- After the first draft is done, put it away for a few days.

- Have other people read your draft and see what jumps out at them.
    - Have more than one person read it--what comments were most common?
    - Ultimately, it's up to you what feedback you take

the UCWbL

Activity

- Take a look at this example paper:
  - What do you see as global concerns?
  - What do you see as local concerns?
  - How would you first approach revising this paper?
- bit.ly/EditingStrategies

the UCWbL

Final Thoughts

Editing can be time-consuming--but it's worth it!

Editing helps you polish your work, and get the best version of your words out into the world.

Editing can give you more agency, confidence, and empowerment as a writer!

the UCWbL

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Thank you for your time and attention!

the UCWbL