

Editing vs. Revision

What is the difference between editing and revision? We often use the two terms interchangeably and yet there are some important distinctions. True revision requires seeing your writing from a completely different perspective that can be facilitated by another reader's comments and questions.

Editing

- is on a sentence level, addressing problems with spelling, grammar, punctuation, or word choice.
- is one-sided. The editor writes comments and corrections on the paper and returns the paper to the writer.
- is hierarchical. An editor looks for "mistakes" and "fixes" them. An editor places value on writing (such as a grade).
- focuses on the paper as a product.

Revising

- deals with the paper as a whole, considering strengths and weaknesses, arguments, focus and organization, support, and voice, as well as mechanical issues.
- is dialogue-based. The purpose or revision is to ask questions, expanding ideas and challenging arguments which require discussion between the writer and the reader.
- is non-hierarchical. Offering questions and making observations allow the writer and reader to hold separate and valid opinions. The purpose of discussion is to expand and clarify ideas rather than "correct" them.
- focuses on the writer in the process of writing and increasing the writer's understanding of the paper's strengths and weaknesses.
- clarifies and focuses the writer's arguments by defining terms, making concessions and counter-arguments, and using evidence. This may involve moving or removing entire paragraphs, extending or narrowing ideas, rewriting vague or confusing text, and adding to existing paragraphs.

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