General Guidelines for Revising and Editing Essays

Note: These general guidelines apply to the writing of a variety of genres or text types. The guidelines are designed to help students become thoughtful and process-oriented, rather than product-oriented, readers and writers. They are not meant as a strict sequence for revising and editing an essay.

Revision

Revision is the process of working with the organization and development of ideas (content) to make sure an essay is as effective as possible. Revision serves to clarify ideas, strengthen the organizing structure, and improve overall coherence.

Revision works best based on systematic feedback from others, including peers. As a result of this type of conferring, essays become more "reader based" because the author takes into consideration the needs of the reader as readers review and respond to each other's writing.

Peer Conferencing

Working with their peers fosters your students' metacognition of the writing process as they collaborate together to improve their writing. All students benefit from sharing their work during the writing process. To be most effective, peer conferencing needs to be an established part of your routine for class writing assignments.

For your students to use this process effectively, they need explicit instruction in peer-conferencing procedures and reviewer etiquette (i.e., how to respond to one another's writing). They need to learn what to focus on when working together and conferring about their essays, rather than only editing for spelling and/or grammatical errors. High school students need to be held accountable for their performance as both a writer and a reader (peer reviewer) of essays.

Teacher modeling of the peer conferencing process using a sample (teacher-written) essay displayed for the entire class helps students to learn the procedures and appropriate responses and questions to ask as they meet to review each other's essays.

Note: See the Peer-Conferencing Tool for specific questions that can guide students as they confer with one another when writing different text types.

Reverse Outlining Strategy

Before students meet with their peers to confer, it is often helpful for them to reread their essays and focus on the content. The reverse outlining strategy is one strategy that helps students focus on the development and progression of their ideas. It helps them determine if these ideas are clearly related and focused on their topic. The strategy includes the following steps:

1. Sit down and read over the essay one paragraph at a time.

2.   Write a sentence in the margin that summarizes the point that you've made in each paragraph.

3.   Now look at each summary sentence and ask yourself if it's relevant to your thesis and strengthens your argument. This is a good way to see if there are any unnecessary tangents (development is off topic).

4.   In the end, you should have a good idea about what you've said in your essay and where you have said it.

Rubrics

Rubrics provide specific writing criteria for evaluating products and performance, as well as guidelines for students as they draft their own writing and work with peers to confer about their essays.

Well-designed rubrics are task specific and are used throughout the writing process. That is, they help students as they prewrite, draft, revise, and edit writing assignments.

Teacher and/or class-made rubrics need to be created for and incorporated in curricular-based writing assignments. Because this type of rubric is class and assignment specific, it reflects specific writing prompts, purposes, and criteria for your students to emulate.

When students use rubrics, they have the tools they need to become metacognitive writers who engage in a reflective, recursive process as they work—on their own and with their peers—to draft, revise, and edit their writing.

Editing

Editing helps to improve word choice, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage, sentence construction/boundaries, and grammatical errors. These conventions are important because they guide the reader through the text and help make the writer's ideas readable and understandable.

Editing essays typically occurs after the revision process of the content. Utilizing an editing Mini-chart (list of specific areas to review/check), students can self-edit their own essay and then confer with their peers. An example of an editing Mini-chart that involves both self and peer editing can be found at **http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/editing-Mini-chart-self-peer-30232.html**.

Self editing encourages students to evaluate specific features of their own writing, increasing their self-awareness of writing conventions.

The peer-editing step heightens the awareness of various print and grammatical conventions for the reader (peer editor) and the author.

Sample editing routines include the fishbowl and monitoring techniques.

Fishbowl Self and Peer Editing

Use a fishbowl technique to allow the class to view a self- and a peer-editing session. Give students each a copy of a sample essay (i.e., one you have written).

Have one student model the self-editing phase using an editing Mini-chart that is displayed for the class to see (i.e., via a document reader or overhead projector). It is helpful to select a student who has a good understanding of the conventions on the editing Mini-chart. This student works through the items as the other students observe.

After the self-editing demonstration phase is complete, discuss the process with the students.

Next, choose another student to serve as the reader (peer editor) for the essay that was just self edited. Have the two students sit in the middle of the class so that all students can see and hear them as they work through this collaborative phase of the editing process.

Discuss the process itself and how this type of editing can help both the author and reader (peer editor) improve their writing.

Monitoring Peer Editing

Assess students' progress in the peer-editing process by creating a simple Mini-chart. List all students' names down the first column and include a row for dates across the top.

Then, as you observe students while they are peer editing their essays, you can rate their level of effectiveness as editors and document their participation and involvement in the peer-editing process.

REFERENCE: Self- and peer-editing and monitoring techniques adapted from ReadWriteThink.org.

Peer-Conferencing Tool for Expository Essays

Name of Writer: Date:

Name of Reviewer: Date:

Directions to the Reviewer

Read the draft. Make suggestions for improvement. Be specific. Consider the questions listed below. Jot down notes for your conference with the writer. Be prepared to share your responses.

What is the writer's purpose? Is it clear?

Is the topic too large to cover in this essay? If so, how can the writer narrow the topic and clearly define and sustain the thesis?

Does the introduction make me want to read the rest of the essay? If not, why?

Are the ideas presented logically and easy to follow? Is the organizational pattern clear? If so, what is it?

Are there places the author can strengthen sentences to connect ideas at the sentence and paragraph levels? Does the author effectively use transitions or need to add more?

Do you wish the author had included more information in some places? If so, where?

Does the writer use interesting, specific supporting details that add substance to the essay? What types of details (i.e., facts, reasons, examples, comparisons) are used to provide evidential support?

Does the author show, rather than tell, to explain the topic? If so, where?

Are there parts that could be left out (extraneous information)? If so, where?

Are there places where the writer could have used more purposeful and precise language? If so, what words do you suggest?

Are there any parts you found confusing? If so, what parts?

Does the conclusion bring closure to the essay? Does the writer leave you with a lasting impression?

Does the essay include a variety of sentence types?

What do you like best about the expository essay? Why?

What could the writer do to most improve this essay?

Are there spelling and grammatical errors?

The Whole Family Under One Roof?

Introduction

A Victorian family circa 1860 (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

If you're like many Americans, you have just spent a few days in close quarters with your parents, grandchildren, siblings, etc. You're ready to go home, or ready for them to go home. But for a growing number of families in which adult children can't afford to live on their own, this is the new normal.

These "boomerang" children have been the butt of jokes on late-night television and even in commercials, but what's so bad about moving back in with your parents? Could extended families under one roof — a common arrangement in years past — be the way of the future?

The Only Faithful Human Institution

John L. Graham *is a professor of business at the University of California, Irvine. He is the co-author with Sharon Graham Niederhaus of "Together Again: A Creative Guide to Successful Multigenerational Living."*

December 27, 2011

I live on a cul-de-sac in Irvine, Calif., that includes eight 2,500-plus-square-foot homes. When we moved into the neighborhood 27 years ago, six of those homes included two baby-boom parents with children and two couples with empty nests. Now there are no longer children on our street, although adult kids are still living in two of the homes. In my house we now have three spare bedrooms — we keep the doors and the heating vent shut to conserve energy.

Houses like mine are a root of the current world financial crisis. In 2006, housing prices in the United States began to crash. That's about when our last daughter left for college. Our house, along with millions of others across the country, literally became worth less when the last kid moved out. The demand for big houses declined even while the new home builders were madly adding more square feet. Circa 2012 housing in the U.S. has lost about a third of its value, down from $25 trillion to $16 trillion by some estimates. This sharp decline in value of the American housing stock has catalyzed a worldwide restructuring of our economic systems. And just wait until 2020 when the full burden of baby-boomer retirement and decrepitude is recognized.

The cure for this demographic disaster is the pooling of resources across generations that we are already seeing in America. The idea of the nuclear family is now obviously obsolete. We are all reverting to the old reliance on the extended family that anthropologist Margaret Mead correctly described as the only faithful human institution. The government won't be there to help on this one. Boomerang kids are actually a blessing in disguise. They're allowing us to relearn how to live in multigenerational arrangements as humans almost always have. Yes, the lessons for balancing proximity and privacy are tough, but such learning is essential for all of us in the 21st century.

I'm Not Seeing a Boomerang

Michael J. Rosenfeld, *an associate professor of sociology at Stanford University, is the author of "The Age of Independence: Interracial Unions, Same-Sex Unions and the Changing American Family."*

December 26, 2011

One of the stories parents like to tell ourselves is that our young adult children want to move back in with us. Our 20-somethings are referred to as the Boomerang Generation, noted for their failure to launch. There is just one problem with the story of the Boomerang Generation: It is not true.

Census data show that what is really new about young adulthood is the percentage of young adults who live on their own. From 1880 to 1970 the percentage of U.S. born women in their twenties who lived on their own (not with parents and not with a husband) was always less than 15 percent. By 1980, the percentage of young adult women who lived on their own had risen to 27 percent, and to 33 percent in 1990, to 39 percent in 2000, and to 42 percent today. The delay of marriage and the extension of singleness can make it appear as if young people are more likely to return to the parental nest. If one examines single people in their twenties, who are the people who have the option of living with their parents, the percentage who live with their parents is now about 45 percent. That may seem high but it isn't: in the past single people in their 20s nearly always lived with their parents.

The Great Recession has actually had no effect whatsoever on the percentage of young adults living with their parents in the United States. This is not so surprising; the (even greater) Great Depression did not affect family structure much, and neither did the Industrial Revolution. Family structure changes slowly over time. Economic ups and downs have little effect on who lives with whom.

A Sensible Use of Spare Rooms

Sharon Graham Niederhaus *is a co-author with John L. Graham of "Together Again: A Creative Guide to Successful Multigenerational Living."*

December 27, 2011

The direct consequence of the turn of the century residential building boom is that now, in 2012, there are a lot of spare rooms in all those houses. Indeed, the chances are the greatest in the last 50 years that an adult family member is now living in your spare bedroom.

Multigenerational living is ahead for all of us. Baby boomers will be living with their kids as they begin to experience the infirmities of old age. By 2020 they'll need help with their disabilities, and the most sensible helpers will be members of the extended family living close by. The practice now of living together as adults across generations will be a big help.

Boomerang kids and baby boomers are learning about the balancing act between proximity and privacy that will be required in the modern families of the remainder of this century. Both physical structures and financial arrangements are being developed to accommodate such changes. For example, approximately one-third of American homes can be remodeled to include an accessory apartment with a separate kitchen and entrance. The major home builders have finally begun to experiment with such designs as well. Cross-generational financial agreements are burgeoning including shared real estate investments and adult children moving back home while saving money to repay college loans (which are exempt from bankruptcy proceedings).

Extended family members are already creatively designing a new future in these tough times. Indeed, now is the time to get ready for the coming changes in the American family.

REFERENCE: Essay series printed with permission from *The New York Times*, 2011.

Grade 7 Expository Writing Rubric

		SCORE POINTS: The essay represents a/an ___ writing performance.		
	1: Very limited	**2: Basic**	**3: Satisfactory**	**4: Accomplished**
ORGANIZATION/PROGRESSION				
Form and structure	The organizing structure of the essay is **inappropriate** to the purpose or the specific demands of the prompt. The writer uses organizational strategies that are only marginally suited to the explanatory task, or they are inappropriate or not evident at all. The **absence of a functional organizational structure** causes the essay to lack clarity and direction.	The organizing structure of the essay is **evident but may not always be appropriate** to the purpose or the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is not always clear because the writer uses organizational strategies that are **only somewhat suited** to the expository task.	The organizing structure of the essay is, **for the most part, appropriate** to the purpose **and responsive** to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is clear because the writer uses organizational strategies that are **adequately suited** to the expository task.	The organizing structure of the essay is **clearly appropriate** to the purpose and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is skillfully crafted because the writer uses organizational strategies that are particularly **well suited** to the expository task.
Thesis statement, focus, and coherence	Most ideas are generally related to the topic specified in the prompt, but the writer's **controlling idea is missing, unclear, or illogical**. The writer may fail to maintain focus on the topic, may include extraneous information, or may shift abruptly from idea to idea, weakening the coherence of the essay.	Most ideas are generally related to the topic specified in the prompt, but the writer's **controlling idea is weak or somewhat unclear**. The lack of an effective controlling idea or the writer's inclusion of irrelevant information interferes with the focus and coherence of the essay.	The writer establishes a **clear controlling idea**. Most ideas are related to the controlling idea and are focused on the topic specified in the prompt. The essay is coherent, though it may not always be unified due to **minor lapses in focus**.	The writer establishes a **clear controlling idea**. All ideas are strongly related to the controlling idea and are focused on the topic specified in the prompt. By sustaining this focus, the writer is able to create an essay that is **unified and coherent**.
Progression of ideas and transitions	The writer's progression of ideas is **weak**. Repetition or wordiness sometimes causes serious disruptions in the essay. At other times the **lack of transitions** and sentence-to-sentence connections causes the writer to present ideas in a random or illogical way, making one or more parts of the essay unclear or difficult to follow.	The writer's progression of ideas is **not always logical and controlled**. Sometimes repetition or wordiness causes minor disruptions in the flow of the essay. At other times transitions and sentence-to-sentence connections are **too perfunctory or weak** to support the flow of the essay or show the relationships among ideas.	The writer's progression of ideas is **generally logical and controlled**. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and sentence-to-sentence connections are sufficient to support the flow of the essay and show the relationships among ideas.	The writer's progression of ideas is **coherent and well controlled**. Meaningful transitions and strong sentence-to-sentence connections clearly show the relationships among ideas throughout the essay.
DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS				
Details and examples	The development of ideas is weak. The essay is ineffective because the writer uses details and examples that are **inappropriate, vague, or insufficient**.	The development of ideas is minimal. The essay is superficial because the writer uses details and examples that are **not always appropriate or are too briefly or partially presented**.	The development of ideas is sufficient because the writer uses details and examples that are **specific and appropriate**, adding some substance to the essay.	The development of ideas is effective because the writer uses details and examples that are **specific and well chosen**, adding substance to the essay.
Depth and understanding of task	The essay is **insubstantial** because the writer's response to the prompt is vague or confused. In some cases, the essay as a whole is only weakly linked to the prompt. In other cases, the writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a **lack of understanding** of the expository writing task.	The essay reflects **little or no thoughtfulness**. The writer's response to the prompt is sometimes formulaic. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates only a **limited understanding** of the expository writing task.	The essay reflects **some thoughtfulness**. The writer's response to the prompt is original rather than formulaic. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a **good understanding** of the expository writing task.	The essay is **thoughtful and engaging**. The writer may choose to use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing or to connect ideas in interesting ways. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a **thorough understanding** of the expository writing task.

Grade 7 Expository Writing Rubric (cont.)

USE OF LANGUAGE/CONVENTIONS	SCORE POINTS: The essay represents a/an _____ writing performance.			
	1: Very limited	**2: Basic**	**3: Satisfactory**	**4: Accomplished**
Word choice	The writer's word choice may be **vague or limited**. It reflects little or no awareness of the expository purpose and does not establish a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice may impede the quality and clarity of the essay.	The writer's word choice may be **general or imprecise**. It reflects a basic awareness of the expository purpose but does little to establish a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice may not contribute to the quality and clarity of the essay.	The writer's word choice is, for the most part, **clear and specific**. It reflects an awareness of the expository purpose and establishes a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice usually contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.	The writer's word choice is **purposeful and precise**. It reflects a keen awareness of the expository purpose and maintains a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice strongly contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.
Sentences	Sentences are **simplistic, awkward, or uncontrolled**, significantly limiting the effectiveness of the essay.	Sentences are **awkward or only some-what controlled**, weakening the effectiveness of the essay.	Sentences are **varied and adequately controlled**, for the most part contributing to the effectiveness of the essay.	Sentences are **purposeful, varied, and well controlled**, enhancing the effectiveness of the essay.
Command of conventions; occurrence of errors	The writer has **little or no command** of sentence boundaries and age-appropriate spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. **Serious and persistent errors** create disruptions in the fluency of the writing and sometimes interfere with meaning.	The writer demonstrates a **partial command** of sentence boundaries and age-appropriate spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. **Some distracting errors** may be evident, at times creating minor disruptions in the fluency or meaning of the writing.	The writer demonstrates an **adequate command** of sentence boundaries and age-appropriate spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although **some errors** may be evident, they create few (if any) disruptions in the fluency of the writing, and they do not affect the clarity of the essay.	The writer demonstrates a **consistent command** of sentence boundaries and age-appropriate spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although **minor errors** may be evident, they do not detract from the fluency of the writing or the clarity of the essay. The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the essay.