

## Revising Essays

Now that you've finished writing a draft, your job is far from done! You have just entered the revision stage. Good writers rewrite: The best writers rewrite a lot. Mark Twain revised his famous book Tom Sawyer 73 times!

Revision is basically "re-visioning" your writing. There are two types of revision: global and local. We'll look at global revision first because that's what you should do first.

**Global revision** looks at the entire piece of writing. Before you begin to revise, if at all possible, let your writing sit for a while—at least overnight. Then,

- Change perspectives and reread your piece writing as if you were the reader not the author. Distance yourself from the text and evaluate the writing in terms of its rhetorical effect. Ask yourself these questions:
  - Does the writing meet the requirements of the assignment?
  - Does the text "speak" to a specific audience (i.e. theologians, congregants, or children)?
  - Is there an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement that tells the reader the position on the subject?
  - Are there enough details to support that position?
  - Is the logic valid?
  - Do the major points connect to the thesis?
  - Is there a conclusion that gives the reader a sense of closure?
- With this new perspective on your paper you might need to
  - Change the focus, perhaps by rewriting the introduction and/or modifying the thesis
  - Re-order the evidence
  - Eliminate or add details
  - Add a conclusion

**Local Revision** examines sentence level issues and proofreading. We proofread for many things: to see if we made typos; to see if the computer caught all of our misspellings; to see if we left out or added words; and/or to make sure each sentence is complete and logical. To proofread effectively, try to

- Read the paper aloud slowly.
- Read the paper backwards. Start with the last sentence and proceed so that you are focusing on the sentence itself instead of the idea in the paragraph. Each sentence should be complete by itself.
- Read with a cover sheet so that you can only review one line at a time.
- Search for errors that you typically make by reviewing past comments on other papers.
- Learn how to fix the errors you continue to make. Work with your professor or a tutor to learn the "rules."

