

13 Revising Your Text



Ernest Hemingway (1899 – 1961) working at a portable table while on a big game hunt in Kenya, September 1952.

“The first draft of anything is shit.”

Ernest Hemingway

Revision is an important part of the creative process. Ernest Hemingway revised the last page of *Farewell to Arms* 39 times. Nobody expects you to revise your work that many times, but if you follow the steps described below, you will have the tools you need to improve your assignments. We recommend that you talk to your teacher about which of the points below you should prioritize when you revise. Furthermore, we advise you to look through your work several times, with a different revision focus each time.

Step 1

Content

- Task interpretation: Have I done exactly what the task told me to do? If your content does not answer the task, there is no point spending more time on it.
- Thesis question/statement: Does my text answer my thesis question? The thesis question helps you keep a clear focus in your text. Do not include anything that is not relevant for your thesis question in your work.
- Personal opinions: Have I included personal opinions? Sometimes this may be appropriate; at other times it should be avoided.
- Sources: Have I used my sources correctly? Consider the following:
 - Have I used the sources independently and avoided plagiarism?
 - Have I cited all my sources in the text?
 - Have I used quotation marks around direct quotes?
 - Have I used reporting verbs to signal a direct quote or a paraphrase?
 - Have I listed all my sources correctly in a citation list?

Step 2

Structure

- Audience and purpose: Is my text created for the intended audience? Is the purpose clear?
- Genre: Have I chosen a suitable one?
- The introduction: Is it clear and does it contain a clear thesis question/statement?
- Body paragraphs: Do they begin with a topic sentence, contain well chosen supporting sentences and end with a concluding sentence? Do I deal with one topic per paragraph?
- The conclusion: Is it clear? Does it refer to my thesis question/statement?
- Coherence and cohesion: Have I used linking words well? Are there good transitions between my paragraphs and between my sentences?

Step 3

Language

- Mistakes in general: Read your text out loud. It is often easier to hear mistakes and weaknesses in your language when they are read out loud than it is to see them when you read your text silently.
- Spelling: Read your text backwards. Spotting spelling mistakes is easier when you look at each word individually than when you see the words in a familiar context. Most programmes also include a spellchecker. Remember to use this actively.
- Grammar: Focus on mistakes you know you tend to make. Ask your teacher which areas to focus on.
- Vocabulary:
 - Have I varied my vocabulary? A thesaurus may be of help here.
 - Do I use vocabulary related to this specific topic? A dictionary may be of help here.
 - Does the language style suit the audience and the purpose?
 - Formality: Do I use an appropriate register consistently?

A revision form that may be of help can be found on our website www.gyldendal.no/e2.

EXAMPLE

First draft of the introduction to a five-paragraph essay

Today, English is a world language. More than 350 million people in the world have English as their mother tongue, and approximate 400 million people in the world have English as a second language. In addition, English is the most widely taught language in the world. In spite of the important role English has in the world today, Norwegian students only learn English in their first year of upper secondary school.

Revised text

What started out as a blurry variety of dialects on a small insignificant island is today the **lingua franca** of most parts of the world. English is now the mother tongue of more than 350 **million** people and the second language of **approximately 400 million** people. In addition, English is the most widely taught language in the world. **Considering the crucial role it plays today, it may seem somewhat strange that English as a subject is obligatory for only the first year of upper secondary school in Norway. Should English be made obligatory for all three years of upper secondary school?**

Created a more interesting first sentence in order to capture the reader's interest from the beginning.

Added terminology/specialist vocabulary

Rewrote sentence and avoided repetition of the phrase "in the world".

Replaced "important" with "crucial" in order to make the vocabulary more advanced.

Rewrote sentence.

Added a clear thesis question.

Corrected spelling mistake.

Corrected grammar mistake: adjectives/adverbs.

Replaced "English" with a pronoun to avoid too many repetitions.

PRACTICE

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir) has published some exam papers created by former students of International English. The Directorate has also published written justifications for the grades these papers were given. Visit Udir's website and find the exam paper that was given a grade 3. Read both the student answer and the justifications for the given grade and do the tasks below.

- Which area would you say needs the most revision: content, structure or language? Give reasons for your views.

- Which points would you say need the most revision within:
 - Content
 - Structure
 - Language
- Looking at too many issues during a revision process may be discouraging. Write a short letter to the pupil where you explain in a friendly way what you think she should prioritize in her revision process.
- Revise the paper based on the recommendations you made in task 2.