Global Revision

Revising a research paper globally involves looking at the “bigger picture.” It requires you to take a step back and look at the paper as a whole rather than look at the paper at the sentence level. When making global revisions, you should make sure that the paper includes a thesis statement. You must also check for cohesion among the paper’s different sections. There are some helpful strategies you can use when you are at this stage of the paper-writing process.

Checking the Relevance of Topic Sentences

Topic sentences are like miniature thesis statements. They give the reader a summary of the contents of the paragraphs they introduce. Well-written topic sentences guide the reader from the paper’s thesis statement to the smaller subjects contained within the scope of the paper. At the same time, they link back to the thesis or to the preceding paragraph. For that reason, it is well worth your time and effort to make sure your topic sentences are solid and function as they are supposed to.

One strategy you can use when you are making global revisions is to ensure that the topic sentence of each paragraph in the paper relates directly back to the paper’s thesis statement or to the preceding paragraph. In most cases, the first or second sentence in a paragraph will be that paragraph’s topic sentence, so it’s a logical place for this kind of connection to occur. This sentence should consist of your own words and not those from a borrowed source.

You should look at the information contained in each topic sentence and ask yourself

♦ Is this information related to my thesis statement in any way?
♦ If so, how is it related? If not, is it directly related to the previous paragraph? Have I let my reader know how it is related?
♦ Will the reader be able to tell that this topic sentence and paragraph are applicable to my subject as a whole and how it is applicable?

Here is an example in which a paper’s thesis statement and the beginning of one of its body paragraphs are provided:

Thesis:
Scholars of communication should be informed that vast differences exist between low-context and high-context cultures.

Beginning of a body paragraph:
One major distinction between low-context and high-context cultures is that many of the people who live in high-context cultures place a very strong emphasis on the protection of their families’ honor.
Notice how the subject matter in the topic sentence from the body paragraph is linked directly to that of the thesis statement and how the writer has told us how they relate. Basically, the reader should be able to delve into each paragraph and understand, by means of the topic sentence, how it fits in with the rest of the paper.

**Checking the Concluding or Transitioning Sentences**

You can also review the last sentence or two of each paragraph to make sure that the paragraphs end the topic or transition into another topic effectively. Like the topic sentence, the concluding or transitioning sentence(s) of a paragraph should contain your own thoughts and words instead of citations so that the paper retains your personal style.

When using this tactic during global revising, you should ask yourself

- Does this concluding sentence summarize the main idea of this paragraph and link the paragraph to the thesis in some way?
- Does this paragraph end by segueing into another topic? If so, will this transition be clear and smooth for the reader?

Take a look at the following example, which contains the end of one paragraph and the beginning of another:

Those in high-context cultures may value family honor and “face” above all else, whereas those in low-context cultures tend to value individualism.

The tendency of people from low-context cultures to cherish their individuality is yet another difference between low-context and high-context societies.

In the example above, the writer ends one paragraph in his or her own words, efficiently pivoting from one topic to another. Also, he or she begins the next paragraph with a relevant topic sentence that picks up precisely where the previous paragraph left off. In essence, the reader should be “eased out” of each paragraph and should not be left wondering what might be next.

**Checking the Overall Meaning of the Paper**

Another global revision strategy you can use is to take a look at the meaning of the entire paper. The sum of all the paper’s portions should be equal to all of the variables included in the thesis statement. In other words, the reader should be able to tell exactly who the paper’s audience is and what the paper’s purpose and topic are from both the thesis statement itself and from the whole paper. Readers should not finish reading the paper and be left wondering to themselves, “So what?” Your paper should have a great deal of meaning, relevance, and value to your reader and to your academic field.

By using the techniques explained above, you should be successful at making global revisions to your work. At this stage, sentence-level issues should not be dwelled upon too much. Of course, if there are some recurring matters that may hinder readers’ ability to understand the paper’s meaning, then these matters should indeed be addressed as soon as possible. However, the most important thing for you to remember during global revising is that if the paper makes logical sense from afar, it may be ready for the next step in the revision process.