



THE WRITING PROCESS

Revising an Essay

When you begin writing your essay, your major concern should be getting your ideas down on paper. At this point you should not let worries about sentence structure or word choice interfere with your flow of ideas. Later, when you write your second or third draft, you can polish your writing, making sure as you revise that each part does what it should do.

Remember that revision is not something you do after your paper is finished. It is a continuing process during which you consider the logic and clarity of your ideas as well as how to effectively and correctly express them.

Thus, revision is more than proofreading, editing, or crossing out one word and substituting another; it may involve extensive addition, deletion, and reordering of whole sentences or paragraphs as you reconsider what you want to communicate to your audience.

SAMPLE DRAFTS AND COMMENTARY

The following two drafts of an essay were written by a student, Michael, for his class in business management. His assignment was to choose a local corporation and, in about 500 words, discuss two or three of its management problems. Michael realized that the assignment itself suggested a **thesis** (company X has management problems) as well as a **pattern of development** (examples of company X's problems). As part of his **invention** process, Michael prepared an **informal or scratch outline** before writing the first draft of his essay.

Informal or Scratch Outline

Introduction

Thesis: Acme Power and Light has management problems.

Example 1: Too many managers

Example 2: Long record of bad management decisions

Example 3: Poor customer relations

Conclusion: Restatement of thesis

First Draft of the Essay

Acme Power and Light

Introduction

When the city said, "Let there be light," Acme was ready. Acme Power and Light Corporation has supplied the city's power since 1962, when it was formed as a city owned and subsidized company. During the years since its inception, Acme has consistently lost money despite a yearly subsidy by the taxpayer. This financial trouble is no doubt due to Acme's management practices, which are downright shocking.

Thesis

Examples 1 and 2

Acme has too many managers and has made bad decisions that have cost consumers tens of millions of dollars. During the last ten years, the company has increased its middle- and upper-level management by two and one half times and built a costly atomic power plant to meet a projected increase in demand for electricity. This proliferation of management has added almost \$5 million in salaries and benefits to the company's expenses, and the power plant cost another \$75 million.

Example 3

Perhaps the most blatant management problem Acme has is its seemingly callous attitude toward consumers. On any given day, Acme is flooded by hundreds of calls about errors in billing.

Conclusion

It is clear that Acme's financial problems are costing the consumer too much.

Revising the First Draft

The Introduction: The day after he wrote his draft, Michael analyzed it and decided what he wanted to revise. First, he reconsidered his catchy opening. Although he thought his opening would have been excellent in another situation, he decided it was inappropriate for his practical, business-minded audience and the no-nonsense purpose of his assignment. Next, he realized that, since all his points about Acme were negative, his neutral audience might think he was being a little too hard on the company. Instead of blaming everything on management, he decided to introduce the company's financial problems more fairly so that his thesis would seem more reasonable. He also reconsidered his title because he decided that it did not describe his essay as precisely as it might.

The Body Paragraphs: Although Michael knew he had outlined three fairly good examples of the company's poor management practices, he discovered he had jumbled together the first two examples—too many managers and bad decisions—while he was writing. As a result, he suspected that his second paragraph blurred his ideas, and he decided to revise it so that each example was developed in its own separate paragraph. Finally, he reviewed his third example—the company's attitude toward customers—and concluded that it was insufficiently developed. Just mentioning phone calls did not support his assertion that Acme was "callous toward customers," so he decided to add more information here.

The Conclusion: Rather than giving his readers a feeling of closure or providing them with something to think about, Michael knew that he had simply quit writing. He felt that his single concluding sentence was too brief and abrupt. Most importantly, he realized that it did not restate his thesis about Acme's management practices. Instead, it left his readers thinking solely about Acme's financial difficulties. Since Michael knew that his audience would remain unconvinced if he let them forget the thrust of his last paragraph, he decided to completely rewrite his last paragraph. After his careful analysis, Michael reordered and expanded his original paper in this second draft:

Second Draft of the Essay

The Management Practices of Acme Power and Light

Introduction (direct approach)	Acme Power and Light Corporation has supplied the city's power since 1962 when it was formed as a city owned and subsidized company. During the years since its inception, Acme has consistently lost money despite a sizeable yearly subsidy from the taxpayers. It would be unfair to single Acme out for criticism because it suffers the ills that all public utilities face--antiquated equipment and increased operating costs. But there is one area where Acme can be faulted, and this is in the quality of its management. Even a cursory examination of this company reveals management practices that are downright shocking.
Thesis (revised)	
Example 1	One management problem Acme has is obvious--too many managers. During the last ten years, the company has increased the number of middle- and upper-level management employees by two and one half times. This increase occurred even though Acme's area of service actually decreased. This proliferation of management has added almost \$5 million in annual salaries and benefits to the company's expenses, which, of course, the consumers are required to absorb.
Example 2	Another management problem Acme has is its long record of bad decisions that have cost consumers tens of millions of dollars. An example was the decision ten years ago to construct an atomic power plant to meet a projected increase in demand for electricity. Despite subsequent projections of decreasing power demands, Acme proceeded with the project. As a result, \$75 million later they have an atomic power plant that operates at 25 percent capacity because the demand for electricity has gone down instead of up.
Example 3	Perhaps the most blatant management problem Acme has is its inability to handle customer complaints. On a given day, Acme is flooded by hundreds of calls about errors in billing, equipment malfunction, or any number of other

complaints. As a recent newspaper article asserts, the majority of these problems result from negligence or from Acme's inability to supervise its employees adequately. If this were not enough, statistics provided by the Better Business Bureau show that it takes between two and three service calls for Acme fully to correct most problems. The cost of this poor management represents about 20 percent of Acme's operating budget.

**Conclusion
(restatement of thesis)**

These are just a few examples of the problems that Acme Power and Light has. In any private corporation, such inefficiency would lead to stockholder charges of mismanagement or to bankruptcy. But because Acme is owned by the city, it is kept afloat by taxpayer money and regular rate increases. Price increases caused by inflation and rising fuel costs affect all of us, including corporations, and must be accepted, but increases caused by mismanagement should be unacceptable to everyone.

Reviewing the Second Draft

The Introduction: Michael's introduction follows the direct approach discussed earlier. Because he felt that a paper for a management course should sound businesslike, he wisely chose to eliminate the rough draft's opening. His introduction is straightforward and simple. He begins by briefly outlining the history of Acme Power and Light Company and moves right into his thesis statement that the company has "management practices that are downright shocking." In the process, Michael demonstrates to his audience that he is very reasonable by granting that Acme has some of the problems every corporation has. Still, he maintains that poor management, the subject of his paper, is something different.

The Body Paragraphs: Michael supports his thesis by presenting examples of Acme Power and Light Company's inefficient management. He now presents each example in a separate paragraph and introduces each paragraph with a clearly stated topic sentence. Following each topic sentence are facts to support it. Perhaps the major weakness of his paper is that he could have used still more supporting data in his first and second body paragraphs. Although his third body paragraph has been adequately expanded, he presents only one example in each of the preceding paragraphs to support his assertions that Acme has too many managers and that it has a long record of bad decisions. Although they are good examples, they are not enough in themselves to convince his audience that what he asserts is reasonable.

The Conclusion: In his conclusion, Michael now not only restates his thesis but also restates his essay's main points. Because his essay is actually a report on the management status of Acme Power and Light, he wants to be sure that his audience does not forget his thesis or the implications of the material he has presented. To make sure, he ends his conclusion with a statement designed to stay with his readers. Fuel costs and inflation we have to put up with, he says, but increased costs caused by mismanagement are unacceptable to everyone.