

Overcoming Obstacles: Resources for Revision



I write, you write, he/she/it writes, they write. We all revise.

Although it's easy to see revision is a key element of writing well, we've all skipped this element at one time or another. We may have felt we did not have time, or were not sure whether more effort would really be worth it. Maybe we were not as interested in one project as in others, or maybe we wanted to revise but weren't sure what to change.

Here are a few strategies and resources for building revision into your writing process.

Work with others:

Writing Center: Come work with writers trained to discuss your work with you and offer feedback at any stage of your process.

Writing Partners: Team up with a friend or two and commit to sharing writing with each other regularly (once every week is a challenging, but useful goal).

Peer Review: Set up peer review opportunities with others writing on the same or similar ideas; groups of 3 or 4 are often better than pairs, as it helps to get a range of responses to the current version of ideas.

Consult an expert: Use office hours to talk with specialists about your ideas and your writing, if possible.

Work in stages:

Begin immediately: Respond to a writing opportunity as soon as it knocks, either by discussing it with someone (and taking notes) or by writing a "timed essay" first response.

Discovery Draft: Write a really rough first draft for your eyes only—let go of concerns about style, phrasing, and punctuation—to explore your ideas and their complexities.

Create stages: Break a writing opportunity into simpler tasks, each with its own deadline; the Thesis Spectrum can offer ideas for possible stages of more complex arguments.

Progress Reports: Briefly report on your progress regularly by journal, blog, tweet, five-minute write-up, or in conversation, ideally with a Writing Partner or mentor, or as a group activity in class.

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