

Revise and Resubmit Tips



What do you do when you are asked to revisit earlier work and improve it? This situation is common in academic scholarship, where scholars submit articles to a journal hoping for acceptance and publication, and frequently instead get a letter inviting them to consider reviewers' comments, revise the work accordingly, then resubmit the article. The resubmission must be accompanied by a letter explaining how the scholar addressed the reviewers' comments.

As you consider revising your work, approaching it with a strategy that works for expert writers may be useful. Here are some tips for planning revisions after receiving feedback from peer reviewers, the Writing Center, your professor, or other readers.

1. Read the revision request/assignment, to be sure you know that you are, in fact, invited to revise.
2. Create an Excel file or a chart to list revisions. Four columns (Reviewer, Suggestions, Response, Done?) will help you organize feedback from multiple readers (in this case, that might be your professor, one or more peer readers from class, a peer Writing Specialist, a friend or family member, etc.).
3. Extract the suggestions from each reader and put them in your own words in the Suggestions column. Be sure to label who made each suggestion.
4. Rearrange the suggestions to revise in a logical fashion. It usually makes sense to group suggestions about the same part of the paper together (notes about the abstract should go together, for example). Pro tip: if you use Excel to list the revisions, you can add a tag at the beginning of each suggestion to categorize, then sort alphabetically by that column to quickly group suggestions.
5. Decide how you will respond to ALL the suggestions. You don't have to do what readers suggest, but you should make a conscious decision about what to do in each case and why. For example, you might respond to a suggestion to include another example by a. Adding another example; b. going into more detailed analysis of an example you already used; c. deciding that there isn't a good example of that and cutting the claim out of the paper; d. deciding that another example is not necessary for your argument.
6. Tackle your revision plan, step by step.
7. Use your Excel file to write any revision letter or similar documents for the next reader. Your professor may require a revision letter if you want to earn a new grade on the work, or you may need to include information about your revisions as part of a portfolio of your coursework. In professional publishing, you are required to submit a revision letter if you have been asked to revise and resubmit your manuscript.
8. Double-check that you have not missed responding to any suggestions. This is a must for academic journals; for most course assignments, it's good practice.
9. Do a final read-over of your paper, imagining you are a reader encountering it for the first time. This step is critical after substantive revisions to make sure ideas still connect to each other, sentences still make sense, everything is cited properly, nothing got duplicated during the process, etc.
10. Resubmit! That may mean turning in the version to be graded, turning in the revised version to earn a new grade, turning in the revised work as part of a portfolio, or sending the manuscript back to the publisher.

Resources for further reading

Adapted from Tanya Golash-Boza's "How to Respond to a 'Revise and Resubmit' from an Academic Journal: Ten Steps to a Successful Revision" (March 19, 2011) from her blog *Get a Life, PhD*.
<http://getalifephd.blogspot.com/2011/03/how-to-respond-to-revise-and-resubmit.html>