Lecture 12

The Writing Process

The three stages of the writing process are as follows:

1. Pre-writing   –   Planning
2. Writing   –   Drafting
3. Post-writing   –   Finishing

We have discussed two stages of the writing process in Lecture 10 and Lecture 11. In this lecture, **Post-writing** stage will be discussed.

12.1 Post-writing

This stage comes when the writing stage is complete. You groom and prune your text, remove errors and fix formatting problems. There are five steps that are involved in this stage:

i. Responding
ii. Revising
iii. Editing
iv. Proofreading
v. Publishing

12.1.1 Responding

Responding to the text is a cyclical process. You may have to move back and forth through the text while editing it. For example, you go through your text once to fix spelling errors and consider it final. In second reading, you may find another error that you missed in the first and you fix it. In short, the process of proofreading and editing requires several careful readings. You respond to each detail of your writing so that the final product is correct and concrete. This is called **self-evaluation**.

Self-evaluation does not ensure that the document is sound and correct in all respects. **Peer-evaluation** is necessary for that. Ask your classmate, friend or colleague to go through it to find errors and give suggestions for fixing them. This gives you feedback of the reader and any information gap or confusing pattern of organization is fixed before you pass it on to its target audience.

12.1.2 Revising – A.R.R.R Approach

The **revision** stage is sometimes summed up with the A.R.R.R approach:

i. Adding
ii. Rearranging
iii. Removing
iv. Replacing

i.   **Adding**
     This step involves filling information gaps, adding points/figures and tables if you have missed any. One good tip is to go back to your prewriting notes and verify if you have covered all the headings and relevant details.

ii. **Rearranging**
     While going through the document, you may need to **rearrange** sections. Reordering paragraphs may also be done for better flow of argument. For instance, a report that drags in the middle but packs in too much at the end requires rearrangement.

iii. **Removing**
     Sometimes, one of your ideas don't work out while composing the report. Perhaps you've gone over the **word count**, and you need to take out a few paragraphs. Similarly, you may want to remove unfamiliar, extra words that are not adding any meaning.

iv. **Replacing**
     Some paragraphs/sentences of your report may have to be rewritten if they are not cohesive and coherent. There might be a better example that you want to include in place of some inappropriate one.

12.1.2.1 Examples of Revision

The following sentences have been revised to avoid flabby (weak) expressions, long lead-ins, and unnecessary fillers:

This e-mail message is to inform you that there is a new health benefit plan available for employees.	A new health benefit plan is available for employees.
I would like to take this opportunity to inform everyone that in all probability we expect to win the contract.	We probably will win the contract.

The following sentences have been revised for conciseness:

In addition to the above, there are contracts that are attached hereto.	Two contracts are also attached.
Despite the fact that most information is posted on the company intranet, please feel free to call whenever necessary.	Although most information is posted on the company intranet, please call whenever necessary.

The following sentences have been revised to avoid redundancies, dull and overused expressions, jargon, and slang.

Ms. Miller, who shoots straight from the shoulder, demanded final completion by January 1.	Ms. Miller, who is straightforward, demanded completion by January 1.
Pursuant to your request, enclosed please find a check for $150.	As you requested, a check for $150 is enclosed.

In the following sentences, the use of verbs and exuberance has been controlled:

The seller said he definitely would contact you.	The seller promised to e-mail (telephone or fax) you.
We must give encouragement to our team.	We must encourage our team.

The paragraph has been turned into a concise, bulleted vertical list.

In the next training session, the trainer will demonstrate how to create podcasts, how to share multiple programs, and how to maintain an Internet directory.	The next training session will demonstrate: • creating podcasts • sharing multiple • programs • maintaining an internet directory

12.1.3 Editing

The editing stage is distinct from revision, and needs to be done after revising. It involves a close-up view of individual sentences and words. It needs to be done after you've made revisions on a big scale. When editing, go through your text line by line, and make sure that each sentence, phrase and word is as strong as possible. Here are some strategies that you may follow:

- Use a thesaurus to find alternatives if you are using one word many times in one sentence or paragraph.
- If sentences are hard to understand, rewrite them to make your thoughts clear.
- Words like "just" "quite", "very", "really" and "generally" can often be removed.
- Keep a careful look out for problems like subject-verb agreement and stay consistent in the use of tense.
- Don't trust your spell-checker; it won't pick up every mistake. Proofread as many times as necessary.
- Check the use of punctuation marks. Commas often cause difficulties. You might want to check out the Daily Writing Tips articles on punctuation.
- **Re-reading** is a key part of editing; make sure everything is exactly how you want it.

12.1.4 Proofreading

Proofreading is the final phase of post-writing stage. Make a final check and fix mechanical or technical flaws, such as grammar, punctuation, names and numbers, and format. Also, check different elements of layout (such as headlines, paragraphs, illustrations, and colors) for their correct dimensions, placement, type, etc. Follow these phases to proofread your document:

First-Phase Review

- Appropriate format (reports or correspondence?)
- Consistent style, including headings, terminology, spacing, fonts
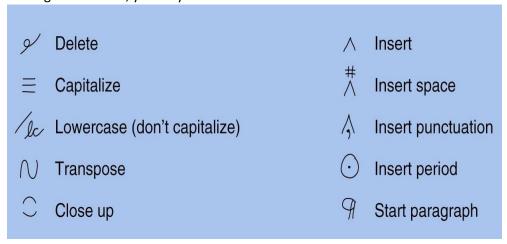- Correct numbering of figures and tables

Second-Phase Review

- Specific grammar and usage problems
- Appropriate punctuation
- Correct abbreviations and capitalization
- Correct spelling (especially names and places)
- Complete web or e-mail addresses
- Accurate data in tables and lists
- Cut-and-paste errors; for example, a result of moved or deleted text and numbers

Final-Phase Review

- Survey of your overall goals, audience needs and purpose
- Appearance of the document (see layout and design)
- Review by a trusted colleague, especially for crucial documents

12.1.4.1 Proofreading Marks

While proofreading a document, you may use these marks for convenience.

Mark	Meaning	Mark	Meaning
℘	Delete	∧	Insert
≡	Capitalize	#∧	Insert space
/lc	Lowercase (don't capitalize)	⋀	Insert punctuation
∿	Transpose	⊙	Insert period
⌣	Close up	¶	Start paragraph

Figure 1 Example of a proofread text

12.1.5 Publishing

The final step of the writing process is publishing. It's the step where you're given an opportunity to share your work. This often means adding a bibliography, ensuring that citations are correct, to secure copyrights of your original work and securing any necessary co-authorship and/or copyright permissions.