

# Duke Graduate School Scientific Writing Resource

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## Smart Revising

Smart revising means revising after you write, not while you write. Becoming a good writer really means becoming a good reviser. If you spend too much time thinking about writing as you write, you will end up unable to write anything. At first, you should think of these as revising principles rather than writing principles. When you write, just write. Just spit out what comes to your mind. Then go back and revise through several drafts. As you spend the time to revise your writing, you will naturally become a better writer as well. Your initial writing will start to reflect the changes you've made as you revise.

Many scientists think revision is simply re-reading the manuscript and making some changes. As I write and revise more, I'm realizing the benefit of doing a few more mechanical things as part of a revision. These things help me remove myself from the writing and examine the structure more closely. For example, underlining all nominalizations is a concrete way to find out if I'm putting actions in verbs.

Here's my "7-step list": mechanical things to help you revise. [7 steps](#)

## About This Guide

This guide to scientific writing was originally created in 2010-2011 by [Nathan Sheffield](#) for the Duke University Graduate School and funded by a Duke University Graduate School Teaching mini-grant. This current site is maintained by the Duke Graduate School. If you have questions about this site, please contact [gradschool@duke.edu](mailto:gradschool@duke.edu).

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