

Editing Basics

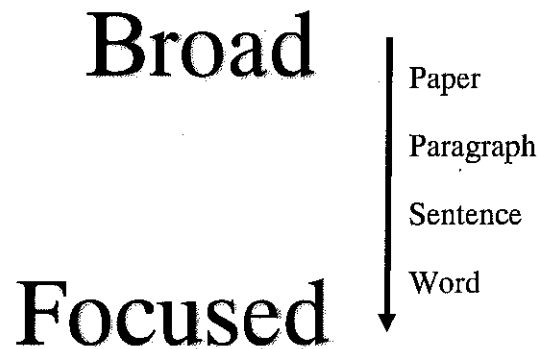


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I. The Structure of Editing

Editing occurs at several levels. You should look at all of them in order to improve your work as a whole.



II. The Golden Rule

The MOST important rule for editing is that editing is a

PROCESS

In order to edit effectively, you need to step away from your work and return to it multiple times. Sleep on it, exercise, read a book, whatever you do to clear your head. Different techniques will help you approach your work from different perspectives.

III. Content vs Style

In general, content refers to the meaning of your words, while style is what is actually written.

On the back of this sheet are some questions to help with editing for content, as well as a few tips to help with editing for style, otherwise known as proofreading.

IV. Questions to Help Edit for Content

Who?: “*Attribute*” Who said this? Do I need citations? If it is someone else’s ideas, did I properly introduce and explain them? If it is my own ideas, is it clear that they are my own?

When? and Where?: “*Contextualize*” Is it important to include the passage of time? Do I adequately provide the necessary context for understanding a certain concept? Is there a ‘full picture’ for the reader?

What?: “*Identify*” What is the purpose of this paper/paragraph/sentence/word? Does the purpose match what is actually written? Is there a better way to convey this purpose in a different manner?

Why?: “*Motivate*” Why should I (or anyone else) care about this? What are the reasons why people should care? Do I identify and explain these reasons? Did I include all of the relevant reasons?

How?: “*Communicate*” How do I convince the reader? Can I say it in a different, but more effective manner? Does the logic of the argument hold? Am I clear in my argument?

So What?: “*Look Ahead*” What does my argument imply? What would it mean in the future? What are the potential issues? Do I discuss these aspects in my work?

V. Proofreading

Content is the meat of your work, however, grammar and sentence structure (the flow of your words) are also important to producing good work. Here are some tips for style editing.

Tip #1: Read your work out loud. Your roommates may think you are slightly crazy, but, through reading your work out loud, your ears will catch mistakes or strange sounding sentences that you would gloss over in your writing.

Tip #2: Have someone else look at your work. The writing lab on campus (located in Library North 2411) offers services to improve the quality of your writing. A fresh set of eyes will often notice mistakes or strange sentences that you have missed.

Tip #3: Read your work backwards. Start at the end of a paragraph and read each sentence normally. When you read a paragraph from start to finish, you will often get into a rhythm and will skip over mistakes you would catch when you are not in that rhythm. By reading ‘backwards’ you will not be in the rhythm of reading, and will notice if a sentence contains errors.