

# Revision and Self-Editing

Foundations of Journalism

Emerson College

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# Revision

- Handing in clean copy is essential.
- You'd ideally write perfect copy the first time, but often you just don't.
- Revision makes stories stronger.
- 2nd Draft = 1st draft - 10 %

# Revision

- Allows you to catch typos and/or awkwardly written phrases/passages.
- Usually you will not follow:  
Rough draft -->Revision-->Final draft  
format you may have learned for essays, but same idea

# Revision

- For features, you will ideally get it done enough in advance that you can do a draft version, then a revision.
- Other times, you will revise as you write. (This is a bit of an acquired skill.)
- Good writers are always self-editing.

# Revision Strategies

- Write earlier.
  - Don't wait until the last second/up against deadline to write.
  - Write your story (esp. features) early, then you'll have time to revise.
  - This also will allow you to see where there might be holes/unanswered questions.

# Revision Strategies

- Print your story out
  - You will be amazed by how many more mistakes, typos, etc. you catch when you're actually reading a printed version vs. a Word document.
- Read it aloud.
  - Again, you catch more errors when you actually read it aloud.
  - You'll also get a better idea of flow, particularly areas where it does not flow well.
  - This goes quadruple for broadcast.

# Revision Strategies

- Take a break and come back to it
  - You'll be able to look at it with a fresh set of eyes. (And again, catch new mistakes.)
- Make notes of what you need to revise, then come back and revise it.
  - Note: “Stronger?” “Move”
  - Then come back and do that after you've finished full read-through.
  - Prevents you from getting caught in one spot and not getting through your story.

# Revision Strategies

- Make sure you're story accomplishes what it's supposed to accomplish.
  - Does it follow the angle/theme you've set out?
  - Does the lede set it up well?
  - Does the evidence support the lede?
  - Are you missing information?



# Revision Strategies

- Fact check
  - Check spellings
  - Check facts (titles, locations, dates)
  - Check quotes (do they make sense?)
  - Check AP style
  - Check anything that can be checked.

# Revision Strategies

- Get someone else to read your story.
  - An editor
  - A fellow journalist
  - A non-fellow journalist
  - Your mom
  - Sometimes all of the above
  - These people will be able to catch mistakes and/or give you suggestions as to how to make your story stronger.

# Revision Strategies

- Realize that every story can be stronger.
  - Writing is an ever-evolving craft.
  - You can always improve something, strengthen somewhere, tighten something.
  - Part of revision is also knowing when to call it.
    - You can always improve it, but you've got to submit it at a certain point.

# Rewrite

- There are multiple reasons for rewrite:
  - To make stronger
  - To make more clear
  - To make tighter
  - To make more active
  - Because you need to cut for length
  - To answer unanswered questions/fill holes

# Rewrite

- Specific cases where you would look to rewrite:
  - Put less important clauses at the end
    - Example: On Tuesday night, President Barack Obama was re-elected.
    - President Barack Obama was re-elected on Tuesday night.

# Rewrite

- To get rid of the passive voice
  - When you make the object of an action into the subject of a sentence.
    - Example: Many new politicians were elected by the voters on Tuesday night.
    - Active: Voters elected many new politicians on Tuesday night.

# Rewrite

- When something does not make sense/could make better sense.
  - Example: The music school director said she wasn't completely sure when the \$1 million violin was stolen, but she thought the theft may have occurred when she left the music room briefly to answer a phone call.
  - Better: The music school director thought \$1 million violin may have been stolen when left the music room briefly to answer a phone call.

# Rewrite

- To clarify whom/what a pronoun refers to.
  - Do not use she/he more than one after a person's name. (Alternate)
  - Make sure that he/she refers to whom you intend.
  - Avoid use of it.
    - What does it represent/refer to?



# Rewrite

- Rewrites can be minor and/or comprehensive.