

Revision Guide: Style

When revising your essay for style, you are looking for ways to revise based on the form of the essay, i.e. its language or its voice, tone, diction, etc. In general, rather than *what* is being said, you are analyzing the essay for *how* it is being said, and then using that analysis as the basis for revision.

More specifically, when you revise your essay for style and arrangement, pay close attention to the following:

1. **Voice:** Does the writer use an effective tone and diction for this type of essay, this type of rhetorical situation, this type of audience? Why or why not?
2. **Noun choice:** Does he or she use nouns effectively and appropriately? Why or why not? Compare the use of abstract and concrete nouns. In what ways might his or her noun choice be revised?
3. **Verb choice:** When necessary, does the writer show rather than tell something? Does he or she use verbs effectively and appropriately? Why or why not? In what ways might his or her verb choice be revised?
4. **Adverbial and adjectival choice:** Does the writer use adverbs (including opening adverbials, prepositional phrases, subordinate clauses, infinite phrases, movability and closure, and qualifiers) and adjectives (including determiners, adjectives and nouns, prepositional phrases, participial phrases, relative clauses, broad-reference clause, and other nominals) effectively and appropriately? Why or why not? In what ways might his or her adverbial and adjectival choice be revised?
5. **Stylistic variations:** When the writer uses coordinate series, repetition, word-order variation, antithesis, and deliberate fragments, are they effective and appropriate? Too much or too little? Why or why not? Are there places where they are not used but should? Are there places where they are used but should not?
6. **Figures and tropes:** Identify and analyze the use of figures and tropes (refer to the handout on figures and tropes). When they are used, are they used effectively and appropriately? Why or why not? Are there places where they are not used where but should?
7. **Coordination and subordination:** Does the writer use coordination (especially compound sentences and parallel structure) effectively? Too much or too little? Why or why not? Are there places where coordination might be used or used more effectively? Does the writer use subordination effectively? Too much or too little? Why or why not? Are there places where subordination might be used or used more effectively?
8. **Sentence rhythm:** When the writer uses intonation, end focus, rhythm (*it/what*-clefts and *there*-transformations), punctuation, and power words, are they effective and appropriate? Too much or too little? Why or why not? Are there places where they are not used but should?
9. **Sentence structure and length:** Are the sentences an appropriate length? Are they also varied in length? Why or why not? How might his or her sentence length be more effective? Does the writer use a variety of sentence structures (simple,

compound, complex, compound-complex) or just one or two? How might his or her sentence structure be more effective?

10. Common errors: Identify common errors, such as overuse of be, obscure agents, abstract subjects, nominalizations, proliferating prepositional phrases, modifier noun proliferation, dangling elliptical subordinate clauses, dangling gerunds, dangling participles, problem pronouns (this, that), sentence fragments, and run-on sentences. How should the writer address them?