BECOMING A STRONG SELF-EDITOR

Becoming a good self-editor is all about evaluating your text objectively. This handout discusses some general areas to focus on as well as tips for taking your paper from a rough draft to a polished work. The more you learn about your strengths and weaknesses as a writer, the easier it will become to prioritize areas to revise/edit.

REVISING VS. EDITING

1. REVISING happens when you are perfecting your content.
   - Check your:
     ✓ Organization
     ✓ Thesis Statement
     ✓ Scholarly Sources
     ✓ Potential Plagiarism
   - TIPS:
     o Revise your content before looking for small errors like grammar/awkward wording, etc.
     o Compare the paper to your prompt to make sure you fulfill the requirements.
     o Skim your paper asking yourself the following:
       ▪ What is each paragraph/section about?
       ▪ What is its function within my text?
     o Check that scholarly sources provide evidence for each major point you make.
     o Seek out feedback on your text from another person, your professor, or the writing lab.

2. EDITING occurs when you adjust the finer points of your text.
   - Check your:
     ✓ Formatting (MLA, APA, or Turabian)
     ✓ Spelling
     ✓ Grammar & Punctuation
     ✓ Active Voice
     ✓ Clarity/Flow
   - TIPS:
     o Only edit after you have finished revising your content.
     o Set your text aside before you start editing (anywhere from an hour to a day).
     o Read out loud or with someone.
     o Read the text backwards to catch grammar or spelling mistakes.

Try not to revise and edit everything at once! Read through your paper several times with a different focus for each reading. For example, you might look at citations the first time through and sentence fragments the next time.