



Tips and Tools for Sociologists

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Checklist for Revising Papers

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Modified from: Giarrusso, Roseann, Judith Richlin-Klonsky, William G. Roy and Ellen Strenski
1991 A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers, second ed., New York: St. Martin's Press.

Ask yourself the following questions as you revise your paper.

1. Can you quickly identify your thesis - ie. your central argument or claim?
2. Does your thesis remain evident and central throughout your paper?
3. Do you support your thesis with adequate evidence? One trick for checking the quantity and quality of your evidence is to put a mark in the margin of your draft wherever you see evidence for your thesis, pausing at each point to review its validity.
4. Is there a clear, logical relationship among all the paragraphs? If one is irrelevant to your thesis - no matter how dazzling - delete it; if one wanders from the topic, bring it back into line. Stick to the subject.
5. Repeat 4 (above), substituting "sentences" for "paragraphs".
6. Does the writing clarify any generalizations and specify the support for them.
7. Are there transitions between paragraphs? Make them look natural, not added on. The smoothest transitions come in the first sentence of each paragraph, referring back from where you came and forward to where you are going. Words and phrases such as "On the other hand", "Nevertheless", "Therefore", etc. are useful in this regard.
8. Pay attention to the transitions between sentences. Some examples of links between sentences are the following.
 - to show addition: again, also, and, and then, besides, furthermore, similarly
 - to show time: after, finally, eventually, previously, next
 - to make the reader stop and compare: although, at the same time, conversely, nevertheless, still, whereas
 - to give examples: for example, in other words, in support
 - to emphasize: more importantly, obviously
 - to draw a conclusion: as a result, consequently, in conclusion, therefore, to conclude
9. Do all your words mean what you think they mean? Check non-technical definitions in the dictionary, technical concepts in dictionaries of the social sciences, and search for precise words in a thesaurus.
10. Look for errors in style (sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, citation). Use a style manual when you are uncertain.
11. Have you stated your conclusion clearly and forcefully?
12. Have you used any sexist language (for example, used the masculine pronoun "he" when you wish to include both males and females)?