# Editing

What it means, why it's important, and how to do it

# What is your writing process?

# Why Edit?

I want to communicate with my instruction that editing is **shaping** and **creating** writing as much as it is something that refines and polishes it. . . . I want to **step away from all the energy spent on separating editing from the writing process**"

(Jeff Anderson, *Everyday Editing*. Stenhouse, 2007)

https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-editing-1690631

# What's the order of the process?

1. Global Issues

2. Paragraph-Level Issues

3. Sentence-Level Issues

# First Up: Global Issues

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- ORGANIZE your **content**!
  - Purpose, audience, structure
    - What am I trying to communicate?
    - To whom am I communicating?
    - How am I communicating?

# Global Issues: Content

1) Start the editing process by revisiting the prompt and rubric
   ○ What are you being asked to do?
     ■ At the basic level, is your paper formatted correctly?
     ■ What is the purpose of the paper, summed up in 7 or fewer words?
     ■ Are there any particular points you are supposed to cover?

**Recommendation: Make a checklist**

# Global Issues/Content

2) Read through your paper

- Work through your checklist

- <mark>Highlight/note</mark> any areas you feel need to be improved

  - **Don't** fix as you go on this first re-read!

- Write down something that you appreciate about the paper! What is successful about your first draft?

# Content: Reverse Outline

Left margin: write main point of paragraph

Right margin: note how that main point supports your thesis

# The challenge...

- **Critically** look at the purpose of each paragraph
    - For the careers essay: Yes, the purpose of the paragraph is to answer one of the three questions asked in the prompt; can you dig a bit deeper?
        - Make sure each question's answer is indeed tied to an individual paragraph
            - Is there any redundancy?

# Why reverse outline?

- Identifying the function of each individual paragraph allows you to:
    - Ensure the organization of ideas makes sense
    - Ensure each paragraph is connected to the thesis
        - Is all information included necessary?
        - Are there any sections that sound like tangents?
            - If so, is that information necessary? If necessary, how can you make your thought process more explicit in the text?
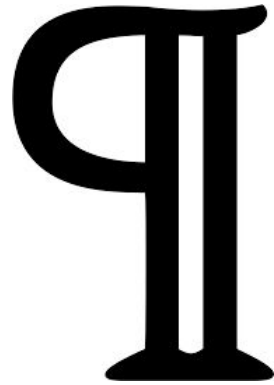
# Actionable Items

- Ensure the paper fulfills the prompt
- Reverse outline
  - Reorganize as needed
  - Ensure each paragraph is connected to thesis

# Right Now …

- Craft a reverse outline

  - Left margin: main point of paragraph

  - Right margin: that paragraph's connection to the thesis

  - And… make note of something that you do well in the paper!

# Second Up: Paragraph-Level Issues

¶

# ¶ Second Up: Paragraph-Level Issues

- Is the paragraph focused?

- Is the topic sentence giving insight into what I am going to say?

- Do the details provided in the paragraph expand on the topic sentence?

- Does this paragraph connect to the thesis?

- Levels of generality

# Topic Sentences

- Balance depth of information given in topic sentence
- Ask yourself: What is my main point in this paragraph? How does it connect to my thesis?

Every other sentence in the paragraph should expand on the ideas presented in the topic sentence. The topic sentence simply gives you a point to further **develop**.

# Internal Organization

How do you want to present the information?

Possible approaches include:

- Chronological
- Descriptive
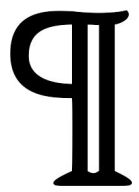- Processual (step-by-step)
- Illustrative (example, explanation)

# ¶ Levels of Generality

- Least specific ➡ more specific

- Give reader details needed to understand your point

  - Think of this as a building process

    - Set the foundation (topic sentence)

      - Explore

        - Explore further
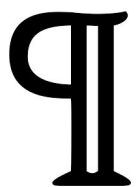
          - Nitty-gritty

            - Transition
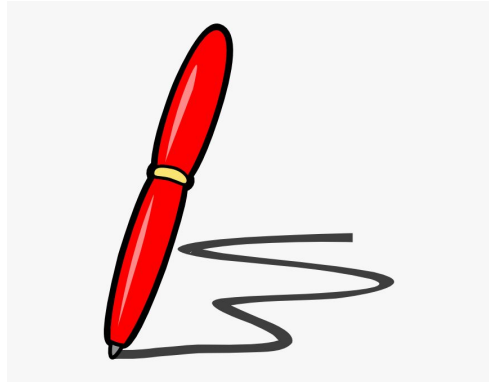
# Transition

¶ # Actionable Items

- Check topic sentences
- Ensure that each paragraph is focused
- Ensure information is presented in a logical manner (levels of generality)
- Transitions

# ¶ Right now...

- <u>Underline topic sentences</u>

- <mark>Highlight where the transition begins</mark>

- Note the paragraph's organizational structure

# Third Up: Sentence-Level Issues

# Third Up: Sentence-Level Issues

Style! Grammar! Rules!
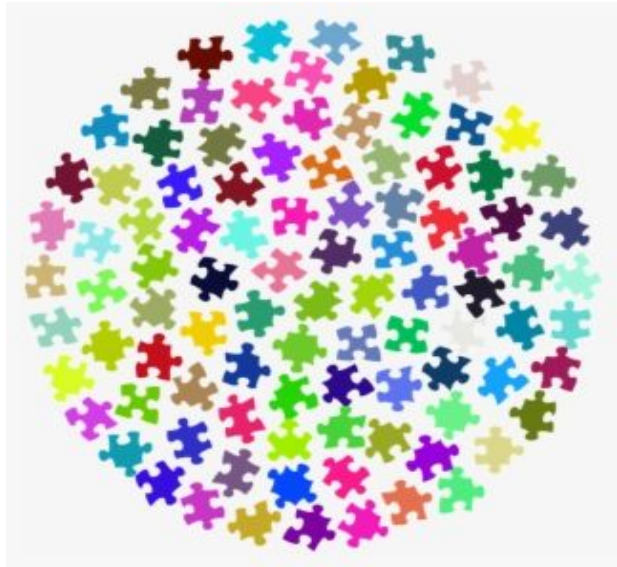
(And commas. Oh boy, the commas.)

- Is this clear?

- Can this be said in fewer words?

- Could these two sentences be combined?
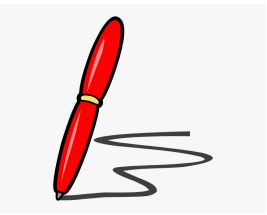
- And many, many more…..
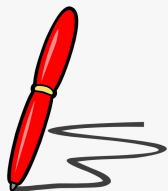
# When dealing with sentence-level issues...

- Look at each sentence as its own entity

# Actionable items

- Edit for grammar
- Ensure clarity of sentences and thoughts (specificity)
- Ensure sentences connect
- Ensure verbs and pronouns agree

# Let's Do This Together. What Do Y'all See?

?

Because of her failure to the company she would no longer be client to my reserves company, and therefore I'd be losing a great asset to my company's earnings while also losing a close friend.

Her company's failure would significantly impact my own company's revenue. I would lose a significant amount of earnings, as well as a friend.

?

Boeing has already proved itself once that it can restore the faith of the people in its products, but in a more advanced world where safety is held high everywhere, will Boeing and the 737 be able to bounce back from a heavy fall.

Boeing has restored the public's faith back in its products once before, but in a world that ever-increasingly prioritizes safety, it remains unclear if this last debacle is redeemable.

# The Process

- Editing is a process — and a highly personal one at that.
- Not inherently formulaic, but you can make it so
  - Checklist
  - Read out loud
  - Have somebody else read out loud
  - Reverse outline

# The Process

- Distance yourself from the document
- Paper or computer?
- Google Docs? Word?
  - Track changes or save multiple copies
- Break it up
- If short on time, prioritize

# When editing, keep in mind...

- Your reader
  - Audience
  - Readability
- Your goal
- Your most common writing mistakes

# Finally ….

1. Global issues

2. Paragraph-level issues

3. Sentence-level issues

# Link to editing document

(synthesizes main points, and has additional resources on reverse outlines, commas, and more)