Guidelines for Editing Your Report

Revising Organization
Revise your document to produce a predictable and logical structure between and within sections. A predictable and logical structure produces overall document coherence, which allows your audience to read the document efficiently and to use its information effectively. Consequently, the first review of any technical document should focus on ensuring a logical and accessible structure.

Reviewing Organization
1. If you have not already done so, divide your document into sections and subsections by inserting headings and subheadings into your document.
2. Read over the headings and subheadings of your document. (If your document has a table of contents, review it.)
3. Are all the elements of your document type present and in the appropriate order? If not, are there good reasons for omitting or rearranging some sections?
4. Does each section and subsection follow logically from the preceding one?
5. Early in the text, is there a clear road map of the entire document? (See Forecasting.) Does the document follow that road map?
6. Review the graphics in the order presented in your document. Do they present the key information to the reader in a logical order?
7. Read aloud the topic sentence of each paragraph of your document. Do ideas flow smoothly from paragraph to paragraph? Will the relationship between one idea and the next be clear to your audience?

Strategies for Revising Organization
1. If appropriate, add sections, subsections, and section headings, and subheadings to make your document conform to its standard type.
2. If appropriate, add sections and subsections to improve the logical structure and coherence of your document.
3. If necessary, revise the forecasting statements to provide the reader with an accurate road map of the ideas that will follow.
4. If appropriate, add new graphics and revise and rearrange old ones to provide the reader with a visual summary of the document's central ideas.

Revising Content
When you are satisfied with the organization of your document, review your document to ensure that all information is accurate, complete, and comprehensible. Check to see that the information is relevant to your document's purpose and to your audience's use. The efficient exchange of information from writer to reader is one of the main objectives of all technical writing.

Because revising content may significantly alter parts of a document, experienced writers review and revise the content thoroughly before they begin to edit for style, usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Questions About Content
Read through your draft slowly, stopping at the end of each section, and ask yourself the following questions:
1. Is the information accurate?
2. Are there any incorrect data entries?
3. Are all outside sources documented? Is all information from outside sources either paraphrased or quoted exactly and enclosed in quotation marks?
4. Are any graphics misleading?
5. Add up all tables in both the horizontal and the vertical directions to make sure the numbers balance. Similarly, add up all percentages in graphics and tables to check, if appropriate, that they add up to 100 percent.
6. Is the information complete? Have you omitted any facts, concepts, equations or processes necessary for the document's aim and for the audience type and the audience's purpose?
7. Is all quantitative information presented fully?
8. Are all concepts explained in the detail appropriate for the document's aim and for the audience type and the audience's purpose?
9. Are there any steps missing from instructions, procedures, or descriptions of processes?
10. Is any irrelevant information included in the document?
11. Is the information comprehensible to your audience?
12. Are all technical terms that need to be defined for your audience clearly defined?
13. Are all technical terms used correctly?
14. Are all technical terms used consistently?
15. Do you always use the same term to refer to something?
16. Are all acronyms explained when first used?
17. Is the density of information appropriate to the expertise and purpose of your audience?

**Strategies for Revising Content**

1. Correct any inaccurate quantitative data or other information.
2. Add further information, explanations of concepts and processes, and instructions necessary for your document's aim and audience.
3. Delete from the body of the document any information that is unessential and unimportant to most of your readers. If the information will be important to some of your readers, include it in one or more appendixes.
4. Clarify technical terms.
   - Replace any term that is used incorrectly.
   - Replace any vague terms.
   - If a single term is used to refer to two or more separate items, replace the term with separate terms for each item.
   - If two or more terms are used to refer to a single item, choose the best term and replace all occurrences of the other terms with the one you have selected.
   - The first time you use an acronym or an abbreviation that may not be familiar to all your readers, write out the complete term followed by the acronym or abbreviation in parentheses.
   - Consider adding a glossary if you use many terms with which some readers may not be familiar.
   - Separate important technical terms and concepts so that your audience may easily digest the material.

**Editing for Grammar and Style**

When you have dealt with the more basic matters included in the revision stage, it is time to review the document carefully for correctness. As you edit your document, however, continue to do
whatever you can to improve accuracy, clarity, conciseness, coherence, and appropriateness. For example, could any sentences be made more effective by restructuring?

No matter how sound your document may be technically, your credibility will be undermined by errors in sentence construction or grammar, word choice, usage, punctuation, mechanics, or spelling. If you need more information about grammatical elements, refer to parts of sentences and parts of speech. If English is not your native language, check the list of common ESL writing problems.

Finally, have you used the language of your sources appropriately and give them proper credit? If your document is supposed to follow an established style for citing sources and creating a reference list, have you followed the right style correctly and consistently?

When you come to sentences that are hard to follow, locate the main agent (thing doing something) and the action (thing being done):

1. Circle the main subject or agent of the sentence. This noun will identify the who or what of the sentence.

2. Circle the main action word. This verb is the key to the action (thing being done or state of being) of the sentence.

Whenever possible, organize the sentence around the subject and verb. Make the agent the subject and the action the main verb of the sentence.

Weak Sentence

*The solid was contaminated [main action] as a result of a leaking cleaning solution [main agent].*

Improved

*A leaking cleaning solution contaminated the solid.*

Here are some ways to tighten up your prose:

1. Make your paragraphs coherent. If necessary, rearrange sentences for better paragraph flow and logic.
2. Use the active voice whenever the passive voice is not clearly more appropriate.
3. Eliminate unnecessary words and phrases.
4. Simplify your sentences. Break long sentences into manageable units.
5. Condense repetitious or closely related material. Look for ways to combine or delete words and sentences that repeat information.
6. Be specific. Replace vague phrases and words with more descriptive ones.
7. Use words accurately. Look for phrases and words that don't stand up to scrutiny.

*Taken from:*