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Questioning as a teacher intervention tool to stimulate student revision

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Questioning as a teacher intervention tool
to stimulate student revision

by

Judith Kay Ramsey

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department: English
Major: English (Composition and Rhetoric)

Iowa State University
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1989

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Revision is neglected in many freshman composition classes even though it is now recognized as one of the recursive elements of the writing process. Early composition research acknowledged revision as a part of the writing process, and some researchers considered it a cure for nearly all the ills of student writing, seeming to believe that revision would surely lead to better written products, and the more revision the better the product. Later research, however, has revealed a complex web of issues surrounding the element of revision.

Based on that body of composition research, this paper will establish a need for teaching revision techniques to college freshmen and then present between-draft questioning as an intervention tool to stimulate student revision.

Definitions

Each study and article that deals with revision and/or editing establishes its own context for the use of each term. Depending on the source, revision can mean anything from last-minute typing corrections to major reworking of a section or entire text. The following definitions apply when I use the terms:

Revising - expanding on existing ideas, incorporating new ideas, restricting ideas, eliminating ideas,
and making major structural changes. Revising should occur often during the cyclical process of writing.

**Editing** - changing words or phrases, and correcting spelling errors. Editing should be reserved for a late review of a nearly finished product.

**Proofreading** - identifying and correcting typos and grammatical/mechanical errors. Proofreading should be done after the typing of a final version prior to submission for a grade.

Editing and proofreading should be conducted very late in the writing process, just before a product is turned in for a final teacher evaluation. Too-early emphasis on editing and proofreading problems will distract a student from the larger concerns of true revision: expanding or restricting ideas, introducing new ideas, and reordering information.

The following terms will also be used in the text:

**Deletion** - the elimination of an idea from the text.

**Substitution** - replacing something from the text with something else that carries essentially the same meaning, such as an example that illustrates a point.

**Addition** - adding a new idea, detail, or example to the text.
Why Teach Revision?

Many college freshmen have had little or poorly directed experience in revising their writing. They often expect to put their thoughts onto paper, eliminate grammatical/mechanical errors, and turn in the paper to an instructor for a grade (Sommers, "Responding"). Many are shocked when papers are returned with lower than expected grades. Most college freshmen are inexperienced writers who seldom possess the skills to complete satisfactory one-draft writing. Revision must be taught in order to help students improve their writing processes and their written products. Revision as a skill may be presented to students by a number of methods.

Students often hesitate to revise because they expect only the final draft of a paper to be evaluated. "If teachers focused their evaluation on the content and organization of a rough draft, then students might recognize the need to make substantive changes at that stage." Students might revise "if the teacher's evaluation helped them recognize the need for substantive changes" (Beach, "The Effects of Between-draft Teacher Evaluation" 111). If Beach's assumptions are correct, freshman composition teachers need to improve their skills in teaching revision and to demand more revisions of their students.
Many writing instructors and researchers have recognized the need to teach revision as evidenced by the following quotations:

Most teachers of writing, I suspect, have found that ten minutes spent guiding a student’s revision of one paper can be more valuable than several hours of classroom activities and grading. (Sudol ix)

Certainly anyone who would teach another to write would be remiss in not teaching revision as a fundamental part of the writing process. (Shuman 51)

**Purpose and Organization of this Paper**

The purpose of this paper is two-fold: 1) to build an argument for teaching revision as a writing skill; and 2) to present between-draft questioning as an intervention tool to stimulate substantive student revision. The ultimate product is a set of suggested questions from which a freshman composition instructor can pick and choose in order to create a questioning session for a particular student. The questions will provide a starting point because several variables must be considered in planning a questioning session, and during any useful questioning session questions will arise which could not have been anticipated. Specific suggestions will be limited to between-draft questioning,
but there are many other times during the writing process when questioning can be a useful intervention tool.

This paper hypothesizes that revision is a skill which can be taught and that between-draft teacher questioning can help the typical college freshman writer internalize techniques for questioning, analyzing, and revising her own writing, a step toward maturity as a writer.

Researchers have studied various aspects of writing-as-process, revision, and teacher intervention in the writing process. Chapter Two contains a survey of major writing-as-process composition studies for their references to revision. Chapter Three looks at major studies that have investigated revision specifically. Chapter Four reviews studies and articles about teacher intervention, which tend to be mostly studies of teacher response. Chapter Five picks out what some researchers have said about questioning, and how they use questioning as a teaching tool. Chapter Six presents between-draft questioning as an intervention tool to stimulate student revision. A complete listing of works consulted follows the text. Appendix A presents categories of specific questions I find useful during teacher/student questioning sessions, and Appendix B presents questions suggested by two researchers.
CHAPTER TWO

COMPOSITION RESEARCH

Composition research provides a rich background of information on which to base theories about the teaching of writing to college freshmen. The recent shift toward researching and teaching writing as a process has opened numerous fascinating areas of study for research. This paper will explore major composition studies and interpret revision inquiries and intervention studies in order to arrive at an emerging theory of between-draft teacher questioning as an intervention tool to stimulate substantive student revision.

Writing-as-Process Studies

Early writing-as-process studies were concerned with identifying the techniques of "good" writers and with classifying the types of revisions students made. These studies led to an emphasis on revision in the writing process.

Janet Emig's 1971 classic case study of eight twelfth-grade writers was designed to learn how students actually complete a writing task. Hers was one of the first studies to refute Rohman and Wlecce's 1960 model of writing as a linear task of prewriting, writing, and rewriting.

Emig's subjects were not specifically directed to revise, but neither were they told not to revise.
noted that for the subject profiled in her dissertation, reformulating, stopping, and contemplating the product "take up so little chronological and psychological time that they almost coalesce into a single barely occurring experience" (67).

Emig recognized that the study did not invite revising, but "seemingly, far more because of her attitude toward revising--Lynn does not really reformulate any of the three pieces she writes." Emig concluded that Lynn does not voluntarily revise because she equates revision with "punishment work," and because her teachers do not "inspire" her to revise. Lynn believed that although teachers require correction of errors, they pay little attention to attempts at substantive revision (67-68).

None of the seven other students Emig studied reformulated any of their inquiry writing. Emig noted a difference between the attitudes expressed toward reformulation and what the subjects actually did. Four of the subjects separated reformulation into at least two levels, proofreading and revising. Several, however, admitted they did not even proofread when pressed for time (86-87).

Emig was critical that most school-sponsored writing is evaluated on "the accidents rather than the essences of
discourse—that is, spelling, punctuation, penmanship, and length rather than thematic development, rhetorical and syntactic sophistication, and fulfillment of intent" (93). She advised high schools and colleges to "seriously and immediately consider that the teacher-centered presentation of composition...is pedagogically, developmentally, and politically an anachronism" (100).

Emig's comments point out the need for freshman composition teachers to focus on the substance of writing rather than the packaging: punctuation, grammar, and spelling. If instructors emphasize the mechanical/grammatical aspects of writing over subject matter, it is only reasonable to expect students to adopt a similar attitude. If instructors, on the other hand, recognize the need for good mechanics and grammar but focus on subject matter at least in early drafts, then students will learn proper priorities. They will discover that they can experiment with subject matter through several drafts before attempting to finalize mechanical/grammatical matters.

A few years later, Terry Mischel (1974) replicated Emig's study with one twelfth-grade writer, also finding that instructors emphasize "correctness" concerns over subject matter. Mischel considered the activities of
correcting, revising and rewriting to be reformulation. During the study, the subject did little correcting, and some revising, expressing a dislike for "large scale rewriting" (309). Mischel found that much English instruction is concerned with the more "shallow mechanical activities," and "superficial, outward skills and conformities of language expression. The relationship of language to personal growth and inner ordering of experience, is sadly neglected" (313-14).

Also in 1974, Charles Stallard studied the writing process of a group of twelfth-grade students who were identified as good writers. His purpose was in part to isolate the behaviors which characterize good high school senior writers (207). Stallard classified the revisions into spelling, syntactic, multiple word, paragraph, punctuation and single word categories. He found that his 15 good writers made an average of 12.24 revisions per paper, while the randomly selected control group made an average of 4.26 revisions per paper. Both the good writers and the control group made the most changes in single words, 109 for the good writers and 35 for the control group. The control group made only four multiple word changes, while the good writers made 42 multiple word changes (213-14).
Stallard identified four categories of behaviors which were exhibited by the good writers but not the control group:

1. the amount of time spent in completing the writing task
2. the nature and the amount of revision involved in the process
3. contemplating or reading the product of their writing behavior at intervals during the process of writing
4. an expressed concern for having a clear purpose for their writing. (216)

In the category of the nature and amount of revision, Stallard noted that the good student writers changed more words as they wrote, although the majority of the changes were single word changes. The good writers also changed more paragraphs than the control group. Stallard’s good writers made many of their changes while reading their papers at intervals during the writing process, frequently stopping to read over what they had written. The control group seldom engaged in such activity (216-217). Stallard concluded, "The revisions during and after writing the first draft suggest that perspective changes or grows as the message matures" (218).
Two ambitious 1979 studies by Sharon Pianko and Sondra Perl examined the composing processes of college freshmen. In Pianko's study, seventeen students spent one afternoon per week for five weeks producing a 400-word essay each week. Pianko observed seven dimensions of the writing process: prewriting, planning, composing, rereading, stopping, contemplating the finished product, and handing in the product. Revision was a characteristic of two of the dimensions: composing and rereading. As a subdivision of the composing dimension, Pianko identified an activity she called rescanning:

Rescanning—a rereading of a few words, or sentences, or a paragraph. It is not a rereading of the entire script. During rescanning, revisions are usually made, most of which are single word, multiple word, or punctuation changes. At this time writers might also contemplate what they are writing. (7)

Of rereading, Pianko found, "when this occurs, writers reread the entire script for the purpose of seeing what has been accomplished, revising and proofreading, and in some cases, for deciding on a conclusion" (8). Pianko discovered that for most of the subjects a draft meant "rewriting the same version, but with some word and/or sentence changes as well as mechanical corrections," even though time
limitations did not prevent writing a preliminary draft (10).

"The limitations placed on the typical school writing activity negate the possibility for greater elaboration, commitment, and concern." Students too often "give the teachers what they want" (Pianko 20). Writing instructors can help students explore and re-explore their writing by assigning multiple-draft papers with questioning sessions between drafts. Pointed questions from an interested reader/teacher can help students know where to begin re-exploring their ideas. If a teacher can shake a student's conviction that he has said what he really wants to say, the scene is set for substantive revision.

Pianko characterized poor writers as having "underdeveloped composing processes, a factor which is rarely taken into account in teaching composition, but which significantly influences the outcome of the product." She said although remedial writers use the same processes as traditional writers, for remedial writers those processes are shorter and of poorer quality. What separates traditional and remedial writers is reflecting on what is being written (20).

Pianko advised that instructors help students develop these dimensions in the writing process if they wish to help
poor writing students improve. She suggested slowing down the entire writing process so that "each dimension can be reflected on and strengthened" (20). Teachers should help students "expand and elaborate the stages of their composing processes," rather than focusing on evaluating and correcting finished papers. The result will help students become more reflective writers (21).

Although Pianko's suggestions were aimed at helping poor writers, they would benefit most freshman composition students. Slowing down the writing process and insisting on revision should bring improvement in any student writer's process and product.

Sondra Perl's 1979 study concentrated on the behavior of unskilled writers. Perl studied the students' prewriting, writing, and editing activities, finding that unskilled writing students edit too early in the writing process and that they edit primarily to eliminate errors in their writing. They cannot see any possible ways of reworking ideas (333). Such students need teachers who will make them realize that their first thoughts will probably not convey their message clearly to a reader.

Also dissatisfied with the linear model of writing, Nancy Sommers contrasted the revision strategies of student writers and experienced adult writers to learn what role
revision plays in student and adult writing processes. She defined revision as "a sequence of changes in a composition--changes which are initiated by cues and occur continually throughout the writing of a work" ("Revision Strategies" 380).

Sommers identified deletion, substitution, addition, and reordering as the four revision operations. Word, phrase, sentence, and theme (the extended statement of one idea) were identified as the levels of change (380). Sommers found that the majority of the changes made by students were lexical.

While students are well aware of lexical repetition, they are not correspondingly aware of what Sommers labels conceptual repetition. She said this difficulty is the result of an inability to see revision as a process. "Because students do not see revision as an activity in which they modify and develop perspectives and ideas, they feel that if they know what they want to say, then there is little reason for making revisions" (380-81).

Sommers found students lack "strategies to help them identify the 'something larger' that they sensed was wrong and work from there." The problem is that students lack techniques to "help them reorder lines of reasoning or ask questions about their purposes and readers" (383). In
contrast, "Experienced writers describe their primary objective when revising as finding the form or shape of their argument... Revising confuses the beginning and end, the agent and vehicle; it confuses, in order to find, the line of argument." Experienced writers "re-view" their work (384-85).

Sommers concluded that while student writers "struggle to bring their essays into congruence with a predefined meaning," experienced writers "seek to discover (to create) meaning in the engagement with their writing, in revision." Experienced writers make most of their changes on the sentence level, usually additions or deletions. They see the revision process as a "totality." "Experienced writers possess a non-linear theory in which a sense of the whole writing both precedes and grows out of an examination of the parts" (385-86).

Sommers' findings suggest that lack of composing maturity limits the revising capabilities of young college writers. Although there are many problems in comparing student and adult writers, Sommers' study does point out some valid assumptions. Inexperienced writers need to develop the judgment and objectivity to critique their own work, and they must be exposed to different ideas about their subject matter and to different ways of organizing and
handling a topic. Instructors must lead young writers to previously unexplored ideas and alternatives. Young writers must internalize the self-questioning techniques that more mature writers use to analyze their own texts.

While these writing-as-process studies all provide new information, all are limited in their investigation of revision. Emig admitted that her study did not invite revision. Mischel's study was enlightening about one student's writing process, but many more similar case studies would be needed before drawing any conclusions. Stallard, though he found that "good" writers make more revisions, did not separate meaning-changing revisions from non-meaning-changing revisions. Pianko suggested ways to help poor writers improve their processes and Perl also concentrated her study on the behavior of unskilled writers. Sommers contrasted inexperienced and experienced writers without considering their mastery of subject matter or motivation for writing.

None of these researchers directly confronted the variables that affect any writing/revising task: type of writing, audience, writer's knowledge of subject matter, level of formality of writing, and so on. There continues to be a need for teaching methods and tools to stimulate most freshman writers to want to produce better writing.
In 1983, Jack Selzer moved into more specialized research, adapting Emig’s research methods to study the composing process of an engineer (Nelson) to learn more about the differences in process between a college writer and a professional writer. Selzer was surprised to find that the engineer revised nearly all of his writing, but minimally, spending less than five percent of his time on the task, which consisted mainly of superficial editing. While Selzer emphasized that more research must be done before any solid conclusions can be made, he suggested that the writing process of engineers may be more linear than recursive, and that in teaching engineers it may be appropriate to "consider revision of little importance in the engineer’s writing process" ("The Composing Process of an Engineer" 184-85).

Researchers must also recognize the difference in the type of writing produced by the engineer and what is produced by students. The engineer was writing professional material in his field of expertise. He knew his subject intimately and had frequently written about it. Perhaps the depth of the writer’s knowledge about the subject enabled him to produce acceptable writing with little revision.

Another explanation for the differences Selzer found may be in the subject’s level of maturity as a writer. As a
successful engineer, Nelson has a great deal more maturity than a typical college freshman composition student. It may be that rather than de-emphasize revision, writing instructors should recognize the need for helping writers mature in revision techniques. Perhaps teachers can help writers reach Nelson’s level of proficiency at mental revision. It seems much of Nelson’s revision is done during the planning stages, before he puts anything on paper. If that is the case, teachers need to assist students through a process of learning to internalize revision strategies.

Thomas Newkirk conducted a case study of a college freshman writer to learn more about the maturing process of a writer (131-32). His work indicates how the writing task affects revision strategies. His student was accustomed to writing the five-paragraph theme and early in the case study was resistant to any revising of her writing. Newkirk felt that her maturing as a writer was stimulated because she was allowed to write about topics of her choice. He concluded that content is a strong factor in a student’s commitment to a writing assignment, and that student writers will mature more quickly when writing about something that matters to them. This notion fits neatly with Selzer’s finding that the engineer had mastered his professional writing skills to the degree that his process included little revision.
Instructors must find ways to stimulate a desire in students to revise their work.

Implications of the Studies

As these researchers point out, freshmen writers too often view revision as little more than correction of minor spelling and grammatical/mechanical errors. Unfortunately, that attitude is fostered in many freshman composition classes when teachers fail to demand multiple-draft writing, as Pianko suggests, with substantive changes between drafts. Writing teachers must discourage the idea that single-drafts will produce acceptable writing in the collegiate world and beyond.

Many freshman composition teachers need to assess their priorities in their teaching. They must learn to focus on the large concerns of writing: the subject content, organization, audience considerations, and purpose of the discourse. They must make spelling, punctuation, and other editing and proofreading concerns of less importance in all but the final stages of writing.

If students are to be inspired to write and revise, instructors must respect any serious attempt at writing, letting students know that what they write is worthy of reading. Writing teachers must take care to never treat revision as "punishment work." Revision should be treated...
as a vital element of the writing process, receiving as much attention as prewriting activities and drafting, and more attention than editing and proofreading. One goal of revision should be to postpone the finishing steps of the writing process in order to bring a student to a fuller awareness of subject matter.

The contrast found between studies of young writers and the professional writer Selzer analyzed might be explained by the level of maturity of the writer's writing process and by the type of writing that is assigned, as the Newkirk study suggests. College students lack the experience and development that contribute to creating a mature revision process. Freshman composition teachers should aim for at least two general goals of revision: 1) to assist students in growing in their writing processes, and 2) to show students that revision can help them to more fully understand their subject matter as they engage in composing.

Call for Research

English researchers are calling for more study into the writing process in order to learn more about how writers write and how teachers can help writers write more effectively. Researchers should try to learn how students handle the choices that arise during the writing process (Odell 40-41).
The answers to those questions "may lead us to revise discourse theory as to accommodate new kinds of reasons students give for the choices they make in writing," and teachers may learn how to help them make even more effective choices (Odell 40-41).

The writing process is a series of choices. The writer must choose subject, topic, point-of-view, audience, and purpose for writing. Then the writer must make another series of choices about what points to make in an essay, how to support those points, and the best order in which to present them. Immature writers often cannot conceive of those choices. They can see only one way to present information or to solve a problem. Young writers need to discover the varied ways of attacking a particular writing assignment or problem.

Chapter three reviews some of the studies on revision that have attempted to answer the questions that Odell and others have posed.
As research on the writing process progressed, revision became the focus. "Most teachers of writing, I suspect, have found that ten minutes spent guiding a student's revision of one paper can be more valuable than several hours of classroom activities and grading," Ronald A. Sudol introduced a collection of 16 essays on revising, published in 1982 by the NCTE. Sudol pointed out that no accepted definition of the term revising exists. Each researcher or writer creates his or her own context (ix). The recent research into revision has helped disprove the linear model of writing proposed by Rohman and Wlecke in the 1960s. Revision is generally now seen as a vital part of the recursive process of composing, done at any time during the composing process.

Many of the most useful revision studies have investigated the revision practices of a particular group of writers. Most of those studies have scrutinized the students' revision strategies and also developed a scheme for analyzing the revisions that were made. A good deal of attention continued to be paid to editing and proofreading tasks.

Lillian S. Bridwell conducted an extensive study of the revision strategies of twelfth-grade students in which she
devised a classification system for revisions that included surface, lexical, phrase, clause, sentence, multi-sentence, and text revisions. Each category contained between four and ten subcategories. The 100 randomly selected students in Bridwell's study were instructed to, in three sessions, record facts they wished to remember, draft a paper, and write a final paper. The students made a total of 6129 revisions, an average of 61 per student. Most of the revisions were made on the first draft and most were at the surface or lexical level. "When students did make changes at other levels, however, they very often made quite a few of them" (207). The subjects "were more inclined to alter what they had written as they were evolving a draft than they were when they re-read a completed draft" (210).

The most extensively revised papers, noted Bridwell, ranged in quality from the top to the bottom of the scale, contradicting Beach's 1976 assumption that "more extensive revisers are better writers" (216). She concluded that there are "developmental differences in both the tendency to revise and the ability to revise successfully" (218). Some students were able to produce successful drafts with few revisions, while others took several drafts to produce final papers. The poorer writers also included those who revised little and some who revised extensively, but generally only
at surface and word levels. The poorer writers rarely revised their essays between drafts, but made hundreds of spelling and punctuation changes while writing. Bridwell suggested that her findings indicate that students revise more during drafting than between drafts. She attributed this tendency to the exploratory nature of the development of a draft, and to commitment to the writing once the draft is completed.

Another explanation for Bridwell's findings could be lack of maturity of writers. Unable to visualize choices such as those Lee Odell mentions, young writers don't know how to proceed once their initial thoughts are on paper. Bridwell also did not consider whether students were assigned topics that they were familiar with or interested in.

In contrast to Bridwell, Richard Beach found that teacher intervention between drafts was more effective for stimulating successful revision in high school students' writing than were self evaluation or no evaluation. Beach concluded that the teacher's evaluation "gives students another reader's perspective on whether or how well the intended meaning has been communicated," without which "it may be difficult for students on their own to recognize whether their intended meaning has been communicated" ("The Effects of Between-Draft Teacher Evaluation" 117-18).
Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte developed a different revision taxonomy that categorized revisions as either surface changes or meaning changes. Surface changes do not add or delete information, while meaning changes do ("Analyzing Revision" 402). The authors then analyzed writing samples from inexperienced student writers, advanced student writers, and expert adult writers, using techniques similar to Bridwell's. They found, on the average, that the expert writers made changes 144 times per 1000 words in the final draft, the inexperienced students made 173 changes per 1000 words, and the advanced students made 282 changes per 1000 words. The inexperienced writers made few meaning-change revisions. About 24 percent of the advanced students' changes and 34 percent of the expert adults' changes were meaning changes (407).

The adult experts and advanced students made many more revisions during the composing process than did the inexperienced students. Most in-process changes made by inexperienced writers were error corrections, essentially editing and proofreading concerns. Most revisions of all kinds were made between the first and second drafts. The inexperienced students' most frequent changes were meaning-preserving substitutions, usually a substitution of synonyms. The advanced students made many surface changes,
frequent meaning-preserving substitutions, frequent meaning-preserving deletions, and many meaning changes between the first and second drafts. Experienced adults made far fewer surface changes between drafts, instead reworking the content of their drafts. During and after the second draft, expert adults and advanced students "turned their attention to surface changes, cleaning up their manuscripts after they had satisfactorily dealt with their subjects." Most of the inexperienced students did no revising beyond the second draft (407-409).

Faigley and Witte were reluctant to draw conclusions, suspecting that "Some expert writers are able to develop a text in their minds and to perform revision operations mentally before committing a text to paper," perhaps accounting for fewer revisions by adults (409). In a subsequent study Faigley and Witte had adult writers revise three essays written by inexperienced students in order to compare adults' changes to students' changes on the same papers. They found that 65 percent of the changes made by the adult writers were macrostructure changes, while the vast majority of the inexperienced writers' revisions were surface changes (409).

The findings of Faigley and Witte again support the assumption that immature writers do not have the skills
necessary to successfully revise their own writing for the large concerns of subject matter, organization, purpose, and audience considerations. Many are content to write down their initial thoughts about a topic, make minor editing and proofreading changes, and consider the task completed. They may never consider whether or not their subject matter is up to date. That there is room for growth as writers is evident when their processes are contrasted with experienced writers' processes, such as in the Faigley and Witte study, and in Selzer's study of a professional writer. Inexperienced writers require assistance from instructors in order to mature into competent, self-evaluating, revising writers.

Methods, findings, and implications vary widely among the many revision studies already completed. In a 1978 article titled "Rewriting is a waste of time," Barbara Hansen claimed revising and rewriting do not in themselves result in improved writing skills, and claimed that her research proved it. She devised a study to learn whether students who did revision and rewriting achieved greater skill in later writing performance than students who simply corrected mechanical and grammatical errors. She taught the experimental group "revision as a process of editing and improving the essay’s thesis, examples, and paragraph and
sentence structure as well as proofreading for errors in mechanics, grammar, punctuation and sentence structure."
The control group was instructed to "make correction sheets (out of class with the aid of a handbook) of errors in punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics."
The control group was not instructed to "revise beyond the sentence level, nor rewrite their essays" (956-57). Hansen reported no significant difference between the two groups in the improvement of revision skills over the course of her experiment. She said that discussion of revision may be what caused the improved writing skills, and that possibly if students discuss revision techniques, rewriting is not necessary (959).

Hansen’s, as well as Bridwell’s, findings bring up the valid point that English researchers have made claims that revision can cure the ills of freshman writing, and that extensive revisers are better writers than minimal revisers. Selzer warned against indiscriminate assignment of revision. Teachers too often rely on "specific planning, invention, and revision tactics" without recognizing the rhetorical situation and adapting to it (276-77). English instructors must ask themselves, "Is revising the goal, or is teaching a student to stop and review the paper at critical intervals the goal?"
One possible weakness of all of the revision studies is that they do not focus strictly on substantive revision but also include categories and analyses of editing and proofreading concerns. It is difficult to emphasize substantive revision over editing and proofreading when all are being analyzed simultaneously. Only a few researchers (such as Broadhead and Freed; Flower et al.) have recognized the difficulty of categorizing revisions and the complexity of the issues surrounding revision in the writing process. These researchers have conducted in-depth studies of revision in the workplace (Broadhead and Freed) and the cognitive processes "which underlie the process of revising and which most affect its practice" (Flower et al. 17).
CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHER INTERVENTION

Many articles on responding to student writing focus on written comments to a student after an assigned writing has been completed and turned in to a teacher for a grade. Too little attention has been given to the effect of teacher intervention during the writing process, which seems a natural outgrowth of the current emphasis on teaching writing as a process.

Teacher intervention is the interruption of a student’s writing process for the purpose of furthering the student’s development as a writer.

Mentions of teacher intervention, particularly by writers such as Donald Murray and Alan Ziegler, and those who have written about tutoring and conferencing, must often be gleaned from larger topics.

As early as 1958, E. Buxton concluded that college freshmen who received teacher comments and were directed to revise produced better papers. Since that time, others have studied various aspects of intervention and/or teacher response, and most agree that it is necessary for student growth. Just what type of intervention, and when it should be implemented, are less clear.

Commenting on student writing is widely used but little understood. "We comment on student writing to dramatize the
presence of a reader, to help our students to become that questioning reader themselves. To evaluate what they have written and develop control over their writing" (Sommers, "Responding" 148). Nancy Sommers uses between-draft written comments because they motivate revision. Without outside comments students tend to find no need for substantive revision (149).

Sommers' research has shown that in practice teachers' comments can turn students' attention to the teacher's purpose in commenting rather than focus on their own writing. This result occurs particularly when teachers identify mechanical/grammatical errors in early drafts, because students then give too much consideration to mechanical/grammatical concerns at the expense of content revision (150). "Revising, editing, and proofreading are collapsed and reduced to a single trivial activity, and the students' misunderstanding of the revision process as a rewording activity is reinforced by their teachers' comments" (151).

Sommers noted that teachers are seldom trained to read student papers for meaning, and that they need to learn to "sabotage our students' conviction that the drafts they have written are complete and coherent." She added, "Our goal in commenting on early drafts should be to engage students with
the issues they are considering and help them clarify their purposes and reasons in writing their specific text" (154-55). Sommers concluded that teachers must develop comments that will "provide an inherent reason for students to revise" (156).

While Sommers mentions "engaging students with the issues they are considering" (156), she does not recognize that often it may be that young writers do not know how to bring their subject matter up to date. In such cases, a more appropriate goal than seeking "dissonances of discovery" (156) would be motivating students to reconsider the facts about their subject matter. Much college writing in current English programs is not aimed at examining personal experience but at sharing factual information.

Lil Brannon and C. H. Knoblauch also warned against teacher appropriation of student texts. The student/teacher relationship leads to the teacher assuming "primary control of the choices that writers make, feeling perfectly free to 'correct' those choices any time an apprentice deviates from the teacher-reader's conception of what the developing text 'ought' to look like or 'ought' to be doing" (158). This interaction can lead to the teacher taking over decisions that properly belong with the writer, actually indicating to the student that the teacher's agenda is more important than
what the student has to say (158). Because achieving one’s own purpose by controlling choices creates incentive to write, teachers have a great deal to gain by allowing students to retain authority over their own writing (159).

Like Pianko, Brannon and Knoblauch advocated multiple-draft assignments. "Single-draft writing assignments...do not allow writers to assert control because they offer only one chance to write." Multiple-draft assignments do "provide an opportunity for dialogue about how effectively the writer’s choices have enabled the communication of intentions" (162). Multiple-draft assignments emphasize revision, allowing the writer to retain control.

Pointing out errors and requiring copyediting on a successive draft are not sufficient. The teacher’s goal should be to help the writer examine the effectiveness of a communication and to help the writer find ways to improve the communication. Brannon and Knoblauch see the teacher as a "sounding-board enabling the writer to see confusions in the text and encouraging the writer to explore alternatives that he or she may not have considered." The teacher should draw the writer’s attention to the relationship between intention and effect, but leave decisions about choices to the writer (162).

Brannon and Knoblauch suggested that answering some general oral questions about the intended message and the
message the reader received can help student writers retain authority over their own writing. Answering such questions can lead the teacher and student to negotiation which will motivate the writer to regain control, thus gaining experience in revising even though the revising may not result in a more successful draft (163).

In 1973, M. E. Kelley studied the effects of two types of written teacher responses to essays upon twelfth-grade students' growth in writing performance. She found that clarifying remarks, defined as "a question or series of questions designed to help the student evaluate the nature of his ideas and consider alternatives in relationship to the writing skills he is expected to demonstrate in his writing" resulted in better revisions than directive responses, defined as "a written comment which gives a specific direction to the student regarding improvement of the writing skills which he is expected to demonstrate in his writing" (141).

In a study of the effects of explicit cues, implicit cues, and teacher corrections, Nina Ziv found that inexperienced writers may require explicit written teacher comments, but that as writers mature, comments should become more implicit, leaving more to the student. "Teaching students the value of revision may help them to change their
perceptions of their roles in the writing process" (377). She found that students began to change their attitudes and play a more active role because of helpful teacher responses.

In 1983, Roland Huff suggested a full model for teaching revision that consists of zero-drafting, problem-solving drafting, and final drafting (802). He noted that he does not imply that drafting is a three-stage process, but that if students attack the task of writing a zero draft [for discovery or initial realization of the topic], it will eventually give way to "the generation of a text" (802-805).

"Teaching students to write zero drafts is effective because the zero draft cries out for rewriting--just as in Murray's implicit metaphor, the newborn child cries out for nourishment" (Huff 806). Huff lists questions to assist the student in identifying audience, writer's stance, the relationship between the writer's stance and the audience, the concept of the topic, and the organization of the topic. Students are directed to use the questions to identify problems that are critical to the text. Next, they are told to write new drafts of the problem sections (806-807). This problem-solving draft "addresses the problems that the writers themselves have created in their zero drafts. The resolutions of specific problems tend to have global
effects, forcing the writer to reword the overall structure of the evolving text in increasingly sophisticated terms” (811).

Once the problem-solving drafts are completed, the writer is ready to finalize. Immature and mature writers have different goals. “Typically the young writer is satisfied with mere conceptual closure and task completion, whereas the mature writer is concerned, given time and investment, with arriving at the best possible resolution of a self-defined rhetorical problem” (Huff 812). Again, Huff uses questions to stimulate dissatisfaction and revision. The questions Huff suggests young writers ask themselves are listed in Appendix B. After answering these questions, Huff’s students are instructed to write the best possible final draft they can produce.

The different goals that Huff identified for immature and mature writers could also have to do with the level of familiarity with the subject matter. Mature writers may have a grasp of their subject matter that allows them to concentrate on arriving at the best solution to a rhetorical problem. A higher level of understanding of the subject matter should be one goal of revision for immature writers.

Richard Beach also has students answer questions about their own writing. He sometimes has students complete
assessing forms prior to meeting in conferences about early drafts. The questions are based on what he has identified as the three assessing stages: describing, judging, and selecting and testing out appropriate revisions. Describing questions help a student determine what he is trying to say, show, or do in a section, help a student analyze the intended audience, and help a student decide what he wants the audience to do or think. Judging questions lead to the identification of problems in the text. Selecting appropriate revisions questions ask a student to consider what should be done about the problems that were identified. Beach uses his assessing questions to learn what difficulties a student may be having in assessing her writing ("Assessing Writing in the Writing Conference" 58-59).

Teacher intervention and teacher response are currently being studied by many researchers attempting to determine the best time and method for intervening in the student writing process. Most researchers agree that teacher intervention is necessary to student growth. A few have identified between-draft intervention as valuable for stimulating revision. English teachers need tools to stimulate student thought and revision without danger of teacher appropriation of student texts. Students' attention
must be directed away from editing and proofreading toward the more important elements of subject matter, organization, purpose, and audience considerations.
CHAPTER FIVE

QUESTIONING

Many freshman composition instructors use questioning in their teaching. Questioning techniques and suggested questions can be gleaned from research articles as well as from articles and books on teaching methods, though there are few pedagogical articles on how and when to use questioning.

In what he calls the discovery draft, Donald Murray, a pioneer in oral questioning, advises students to first impose a deadline, then gather plenty of information and write quickly, without notes, by ear (beginning readers should read aloud). "Do nothing that stops the flow of writing. The draft is the goal because once you have a draft you can, if necessary, rewrite and rewrite until it works" (A Writer Teaches Writing 52-56). Revision "is not another step in the [writing] process, it is the process repeated as many times as is necessary to produce a text worthy of editing" (56). Murray’s questions for students to use during their revision processes can be found in Appendix B.

Murray has separated revision into two types: internal and external. "Internal revision occurs when writers are trying to find out what they have to say; external revision
when they know what they have to say and are revising or editing their work so it can be understood by another audience" ("Motivating Force of Revision" 57).

Muriel Harris, an expert in the remedial one-to-one tutorial, advocates oral questioning in student/teacher writing conferences. She, along with several others, reports that teachers and students alike are enthusiastic about the conference method of teaching writing. The conference gives a student an opportunity to talk about his own writing. Teachers claim conferencing is the best part of their teaching, that they can get to know their students and offer individual help, and that talking is more effective in gaining student attention than written comments on essays (Teaching One-to-One 3-4).

Harris says asking questions can help students find their own answers. Questions can "clarify for us and for students what problems the students are having and they can move students away from minor editing by suggesting a more appropriate agenda of writing concerns." They can "also indicate that a real search or discovery is going on" (63).

According to Donald Graves, questioning can also open a conference, reflect a writer’s information, deal with the writing process, uncover the essay’s development, deal with basic structure, and cause a student to examine a problem after leaving the conference (107-17).
Many other writing teachers/researchers also use written or oral questioning at various stages of the writing process to assist students in improving their writing processes and products. Flanigan and Menendez (257), Clark (126-28), Carnicelli (114-15), Beach ("Demonstrating Techniques for Assessing Writing in the Writing Conference" 58-59), Huff (808-809, 812-13), Brannon and Knoblauch (163), Kelley (141), and Lindemann (196-200) are among them.
CHAPTER SIX

BETWEEN-DRAFT QUESTIONING

Questions can be useful at many stages of the student writing process, from prewriting to final revising, editing, and proofreading. Questioning is especially well suited to between-draft stimulation of substantive revision because it is a way of alerting a student to problems and alternatives while leaving the choices of how to solve problems and which alternatives to use to the student. Questioning can also cause students to "stop trying to make a final draft of their first draft" (Huff 805) by creating doubts about the communication of their messages.

Hairston and Ruszkiewicz neatly separate writing into two categories: factual and discovery. Factual writing, Type I, is that writing in which the writer is quite familiar with the subject matter and needs to communicate knowledge to others. Discovery writing, Type II, is that writing in which the writer is writing to discover meaning (8-12). Several researchers have recognized a difference, but none has clarified the distinction as well as Hairston and Ruszkiewicz. Murray ("Motivating Force of Revision") explored the idea of two types of writing with his notions of internal and external revision. Perhaps the fact that Selzer's professional writer was performing Type I writing,
was an expert in his subject, and was experienced at writing about it contributed greatly to his need for minimal revision.

At present, a predominant theory in teaching freshman composition is the rhetorical approach with an emphasis on Hairston and Ruszkiewicz' Type I writing. Students write about topics after gathering data from outside sources. A goal of revision in such programs should be pausing to bring the subject matter up to date, that is, creating in a student a need to understand her subject more fully.

**How Between-Draft Questioning Worked for Me**

As a beginning composition teacher, I tried many teaching methods that were suggested in various classes, that were outlined in books and articles, and that were explained and praised by colleagues (both beginning and experienced teachers). One method that proved comfortable for me as well as helpful for my students was between-draft oral questioning during conferences. Papers revised after questioning sessions displayed markedly more improvement than papers revised following written comments. The revised papers following questioning often showed thoughtful reconsideration of the content, while revised papers following written comments tended to be simple corrections of teacher-identified errors. During a between-draft
questioning conference both the student and I concentrated on the larger concerns of revision: understanding the subject matter, adding new material, reorganizing sections or overall structure, deleting superfluous text, attending to audience considerations, and judging how well the paper fulfilled its purpose.

To evaluate the changes that students make in their drafts following a between-draft questioning session, I borrow some of the category labels identified by Sommers in her study of student and adult writers ("Revision Strategies" 380). Those categories of deletion, substitution, addition, and reordering are defined in Chapter 1. One difference is that my focus here is strictly on meaning level changes. Surface level changes are not identified or classified in early drafts. Revision operations can occur at the phrase, sentence, or thematic level and affect the communication of the message, or the message itself.

The most dramatic change was in Charles' writing process. Charles was a quiet student who seldom contributed to class discussions. His early assignments were filled with proofreading, spelling, lexical and grammatical errors. They were also shallow and undeveloped, lacking conviction and evidence. During our first conference Charles openly
admitted to disliking writing, and said that he felt writing should not be tampered with once it was on paper. He felt that a person’s first thoughts were what he really wanted to say. He never revised his writing and objected when assigned to do his first rewrite.

Slowly, through several between-draft questioning conferences, which focused at various times on subject matter, organization, and audience considerations, Charles’ attitude toward revision did a complete reversal. By the final assignment, Charles was voluntarily scheduling extra conferences and completing extra drafts in order to produce a better paper. He was using outside sources to learn more about his subject matter. He said that he had never before understood that he could improve on his first thoughts about a subject. Charles’ later papers displayed better organization, more conviction, and more awareness of the intended audience. Because he was taking more pride in his work, Charles also cleaned up many of the mechanical/grammatical errors that overpowered his early work.

Ted’s case is a less dramatic example of successful between-draft questioning. Ted joined in class discussions, enjoyed writing, and produced imaginative papers to successfully fulfill all assignments. Our questioning
sessions focused on subject matter and audience considerations. Ted was overjoyed that a teacher was taking the time to read his paper thoroughly enough to question him about its content, and that a teacher was interested enough in the subject and him to spend 15 minutes discussing the subject and his views on it. Ted’s revisions following questioning sessions were thoughtful and successful. He added new examples and made sure that his point of view was consistent throughout the entire paper.

Susan was an entirely different kind of success. Susan had received A’s in high school English and expected to receive A’s in freshman composition. She was surprised by her first C, and frantic with her second C. Like Charles, Susan was used to single-draft writing, and to putting little effort into her papers. She had no idea how to revise her papers successfully. Her organization was sound and her mechanical/grammatical skills were good. Susan’s papers lacked substance and her prose was writer-based. Our questioning sessions focused on subject matter and audience considerations. Change in Susan’s writing process and in her product was slow. She didn’t want to probe below the surface of her chosen topics.

Through several questioning sessions, Susan came to understand that higher quality was expected of her writing
than she was accustomed to giving in high school, and that she needed to understand her subject matter more thoroughly. By the end of the semester, Susan was producing slightly better papers, but more importantly, she was becoming aware of the weak spots in her own writing process and was determined to improve her process and products. Dissatisfaction with her work had been created, a great motivator toward revision.

If students’ revised papers following questioning showed marked improvement over revised papers following written comments, how much more effective could my questioning be if it were more carefully designed to lead a student to identify problems in a text and to challenge the student to discover ways to strengthen the paper? The remainder of this chapter explores my emerging theory of between-draft questioning as an intervention tool to stimulate student revision.

**Why Between-Draft Questioning Is Effective**

Questioning is used by many teachers in different ways at various times during the writing process. Between-draft questioning can be particularly effective because the student has written thoughts down on paper and is at a vulnerable point, hoping that the instructor will like the draft, likely aware that there are some weaknesses in the
text, but unable to pinpoint the areas that need strengthening.

Directed between-draft questioning can

- let a student know her writing has been carefully read by a teacher
- make a student question her writing product and her writing process
- bring a student to an awareness of alternatives
- motivate a student to make choices among those alternatives.

Questions about subject matter can let a student know her draft was closely read, that further information may be needed in the paper, and that research should be conducted on the subject. Questions about how she went about writing the paper can help a student understand her own writing process. Questions about the details a writer chose to use to support a topic statement may stimulate a writer’s thinking about the choices that she made. Questions about how and why a writer chose certain details or examples can cause a young writer to reexamine her choices.

The right questions from a concerned teacher can motivate a student to indulge in both internal and external revision. The right questions will force a student to examine her writing for a number of qualities, and will
stimulate the desire to make changes. The right questions will force the student to re-examine her information and the position she has taken. Other questions will force her to consider whether her words convey her message to a reader. The right questions will point out weaknesses in the writing without danger of the teacher appropriating the text. Questions will show a student that the instructor is interested in what the student has to say and is not simply searching for errors to mark. The right kinds of questions will lead a student to mature in her writing process and also to produce a better product.

Between-draft questioning can be an effective tool in helping students learn whether or not their intended meaning has been communicated. Questions can be implicit, explicit, exploratory, or directive. If a teacher/reader asks questions such as "Can you tell me what you mean in this paragraph?" or "What is the most important point you want to make to your reader?" the student should be alerted that her message is not being clearly communicated. Subsequent questions can direct the student in her search for her own meaning, in her search for ways to communicate the meaning that is clear in her own mind, or in her search of more knowledge of the subject matter.

An instructor must use between-draft questioning with care. While revision is generally a positive activity for
college freshman writers, an instructor must always consider the variables in each situation. Occasionally, writers can produce effective writing in a single draft. At times, assignments do not warrant revision. A teacher must evaluate the reasons for revision, which vary with each assignment. The teacher must consider the purpose of the writing, the subject, and the audience, as well as the genre, the format, the student’s knowledge of the subject, the length of the text, and the formality of the presentation (Faigley and Witte, "Analyzing Revision" 410-11). Does the assignment call for Type I or Type II writing? An instructor must take care not to require extensive revision routinely, motivated by the notion that freshman writers must learn to revise more because mature writers do, because, after all, mature writers don’t always revise.

**How Between-Draft Questioning Can Be Used**

The student/teacher conference is an excellent setting for a between-draft questioning session. Since it is not realistic to expect college freshmen to deal with more than one or two major changes per draft of a paper, each between-draft questioning session should focus on one or two issues only. Real progress is made if a student makes substantive changes in one or two areas. Each change a student makes
reinforces in his mind the idea that change is possible and may make his paper stronger.

The questioning session should be kept short (15 minutes should be adequate). Some experienced instructors can read a draft for the first time during a conference, quickly cut to the heart of the matter, and ask pertinent questions that will make the student see his material in a new light. Other instructors will need to read the draft prior to the conference and have a set of questions written out to ask the student. Whatever the individual approach, the important point is that the teacher ask questions that will stimulate in the student a desire to improve the text.

A teacher’s intentions may be more important than the questions she chooses to ask. An instructor’s interest in what a young writer has to say will be motivation for many students to strive for improvement, which will lead them naturally into revision. A conference about a student’s writing can be successfully opened with questions about the student’s topic and the student’s interest in the topic. For example, the instructor could ask, "When did you first become interested in fly fishing (or local politics, or jazz music)?" Such questions show a student that the instructor views him as an individual, a worthy writer, not just a body that occupies a seat in class or represents a paper to be graded.
Creating dissatisfaction with a draft of a paper is a step in leading a student to want to revise. Goading a student into questioning his own writing product and his writing process breeds that dissatisfaction. Questions such as "What other examples could you use to illustrate this point? Have you chosen the best example?" or "I’m confused. Can you explain what you mean in this paragraph?" will plant a seed of doubt in a student’s mind. The student will begin to wonder if he should have done something differently. Those same questions can cue a student that he needs to bring his subject matter up to date.

The next step, bringing a student to an awareness of alternatives, began when the teacher mentioned the possibility of choices. Questions such as "Are there more details or examples you could include to strengthen your point?" or "What objections might your audience have to this statement?" will help to open a student’s mind to the exploration of alternatives.

Once a student feels that his work is being carefully read, has come to a dissatisfaction with his product or a knowledge that he needs to know more about the subject, and is aware of his alternatives, the teacher can press for action. "Will one of the examples you just told me better illustrate this point?" "Will rearranging paragraphs or
sections strengthen your main point?" Such questions invite revision. A motivated student now has the tools, desire, and reason for revising.

**Other Uses of Questions**

Questions are especially useful during between-draft student/teacher conferences, but they are also effective in other ways. Many teachers are currently using questions successfully in peer editing sessions, and on self-evaluation worksheets.

Peer editing sessions give a writer a new perspective on a paper. Peer editors can be thoughtful, probing, and thorough. With basic questions provided by a teacher, peer editors can help a student writer see her subject from a new angle. The peer editor provides immediate, critical feedback. Questions in peer editing can be used in at least two different ways. The peer editor can read the text and ask directed questions of the writer, or the peer editor can read the essay and answer specific questions about it.

If the peer editor is instructed to ask questions of the author, the teacher may wish to develop a set of questions from Appendix A to direct the questioning. Such a questioning session should come only after the class has worked on the areas targeted by the questioning and is familiar with the expectations of the questioning session.
and the writing assignment. Questions could include those that help clarify subject matter for the audience, such as "What do you mean in this paragraph?", or those that affect audience considerations, such as "How will your audience feel about this point?"

If the peer editor is instructed to answer questions after reading the text, the teacher may want to use both Appendix A and Appendix B to choose several appropriate questions to help a student writer deal with a particular assignment. Such questions should help the student writer, once she receives the peer editing worksheet, to probe into her alternative choices. Questions such as "What are the main points of the essay?", or "Does the introduction capture your interest? If not, can you suggest an alternative introduction?" can make the student aware of how well her message is being conveyed to a reader, and how the reader is reacting to her introduction.

Questioning self-evaluation worksheets can also be used to sabotage a student’s conviction that her text is complete, to make her aware of a need to bring subject matter up to date. If a student has to complete a self-evaluation worksheet on a first draft of a paper, she may discover that she wishes to make changes in her text. Questions such as "What is the thesis statement of your
paper?" will insure that the student is at least trying to focus on one main point. Questions about audience can make her consider how a reader is likely to react to her paper.

**The Questions**

No formula for a set of questions will fill the needs of all students. A writing instructor should be armed with a large supply of probing questions that can be tailored to fit each questioning session with a student. The focus of instruction at the time of the questioning session will affect the questions chosen. The needs and sensitivities of the individual student should always govern the choice of questions. The situational variables mentioned earlier must also be considered when choosing questions for a questioning session.

The sets of questions in Appendix A illustrate the kinds of questions that can be used in a between-draft questioning session where the goal is large-scale revision. The questions are loosely categorized into subject matter, audience, purpose, and organization, which will naturally overlap. There is no hierarchy of importance in the order in which the questions are presented, because each questioning session must be designed to meet the needs of a particular student and situation. While an instructor can begin a conference armed with several appropriate questions,
situations will arise during conferences that will lead away from the chosen questions into other areas of concern. The important point is to keep the focus on questions that will stimulate large-scale revision. The instructor must take care not to allow a between-draft questioning session to deteriorate into an editing or proofreading session.

Implications

The intent of this paper has been to establish a need for teaching revision techniques for college freshmen, and to present between-draft questioning as an intervention tool to stimulate student revision. Between-draft questioning is a teaching tool that should help students mature as writers. Freshman composition instructors must recognize that their students are immature writers who need assistance in internalizing revision techniques. Instructors who help students slow down their writing processes to examine each element will help those students on the path to being mature writers. By asking the right questions, particularly between drafts of a paper, a teacher can cue a student on how to go about the formidable task of revising a writing assignment. Each successful revision a student completes adds a building block to her growth as a writer.
WORKS CONSULTED


Chap. 1.


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Questions to Probe Subject Matter

1. What is the most important thing you say about your subject? What is the main point? What is your thesis statement?
2. Do you know more about the subject than you tell in this paper?
3. Why did you choose this subject? Is it important to you? Why?
4. Does this point lead to the main point? How?
5. What are you trying to do in this paper?
6. Is the information correct?
7. Can you be more specific?
8. What evidence supports this statement?
9. What is the strongest point in your paper? What gives it its strength?
10. What is the weakest point in your paper? Can it be strengthened?
11. Does this statement move your paper along toward its logical conclusion?
12. Could you add details to support this point?
13. Would an example clarify this point?
14. Does the most important point receive the most attention?
15. Does your introduction catch the reader's interest? Why?
16. Does your introduction tell the reader how your paper will proceed?

17. Can you think of another way you could introduce your subject?

18. Is there another way you could conclude your paper?

19. What are you trying to say in this paragraph (section)?

20. Can you think of any important information that you have not included?

21. Does this oversimplify the problem?

22. How could you explain this more simply?

23. How could you paraphrase this in your own words?

24. Is this your own idea, or does it need to be documented?
Questions to Understand Audience

1. Who do you expect to read this paper?

2. What are some of the characteristics of the audience? Age? Sex? Educational level? Social class? Where do they live?

3. Why are they interested in this subject?


5. What does your reader want or need to know about the subject? Why?

6. Will your reader understand this statement? (Are the tone and language appropriate for the audience?)

7. Will your audience agree or disagree with your main point? Why?

8. Do you want to persuade your audience to take action after reading your paper? What action? Why?

9. What is your attitude toward the audience?

10. Why should anyone read your paper?

11. What will make your reader turn the page?
Questions to Determine Purpose

1. What is your purpose in writing this paper?
2. Do you hope to persuade your reader to take action?
3. Do you want to entertain your audience?
4. Are you trying to inform your audience?
5. Are you evaluating your subject?
6. Does your paper achieve its purpose? Does it persuade, entertain, inform, or evaluate?
7. Is the purpose clear to the audience?
8. Does this statement (paragraph, point) help to achieve the purpose of the paper?
9. If you were the audience you have identified, would you be convinced?
Questions to Clarify Organization

1. What is the beginning, middle, and end to your paper?

2. Does this sentence (paragraph, section) build on the one before it?

3. Why did you put things in this order? Should anything in the paper be rearranged?

4. What would happen if you moved this paragraph ahead of that paragraph?

5. Does everything in the paper relate to your thesis?

6. Is this repetition of your idea necessary?

7. Do you move smoothly between point A and point B?

8. How can you make the move between points A and B smooth?

9. Does each paragraph contain a central idea?

10. Does everything in this paragraph relate to its central idea?
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Murray’s Questions for Student Revision

[1] Do I have enough information? If not, then I will have to COLLECT more information.

[2] Do I say one thing? Can I answer the question, "What does this mean?" If not, then I will have to PLAN a new focus.

[3] Do I speak in an appropriate voice? Does the writing sound right? If not, then I will have to PLAN how to rehearse so that I will hear an appropriate voice.

[4] Do I answer the reader’s questions as they occur to the reader? If not, then I will have to PLAN so that I can create a DESIGN that answers the reader’s questions.

[5] Do I deliver enough information to satisfy the reader? If not, then I will have to DEVELOP the piece more fully. (57–57)
Huff's Questions for Student Revision

1. Read your first paragraph aloud to someone else. If no real audience is available, read it aloud to an imaginary best friend. Does your audience want to hear more? Could you start your paper with your second paragraph? How could you rewrite your first paragraph in order to capture your audience's attention more effectively?

2. What is the thesis or point of your paper? Are all of your major ideas clearly subordinated to the point of your paper? Could one of your paper's subordinated ideas better serve as the central point? If your paper has three major ideas, could you get by with two or do you need a fourth?

3. Would the progression of your paper profit from a reordering of the sequence of your major ideas?

4. Are your major ideas related in ways that you have not shown--by means of comparisons and contrasts of size, number, duration; cause and effect, and so on? Would making such relationships explicit strengthen or enrich your paper?

5. Identify the patterns of opposition in your paper. Could you profitably introduce others? Can you sharpen your patterns of opposition and
increase the tension of your writing? Do you resolve your oppositions in surprising or interesting ways?

6. Are all of your major ideas demonstrated with concrete examples? Could you use more interesting or humorous examples?

7. Are all of your assertions or arguments supported with convincing evidence? Do you need to go to the library? (Don’t kid yourself.)

8. Does your final paragraph serve to conclude the paper as a whole or simply conclude the preceding point? Could you simply delete it? If your last paragraph is necessary, will your audience remember it? Could you rewrite it in a more interesting way? (812-13)
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