

# You Mean Revising, Editing, and Proofreading Aren't All the Same Thing?!?

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Have you ever felt that you put a lot of time into 'revising' an essay, only to have your instructor comment that s/he doesn't recognize the work you've done? It could be that you weren't actually revising (although you may have thought you were); perhaps you were only editing or proofreading.

Differences do exist among these three things, each of which is usually done at a specific stage in the writing process. This handout was designed to clarify the intentions of revising, editing, and proofreading so you'll have a better idea of what you need to do with your draft.

## Revising

- is usually done with the first draft
- focuses on grand-scale issues - such as audience, organization, content, gaps in information/argument and purpose - that affect the entire paper
- does not focus on or include work with grammar, usage, and mechanics

## Editing

- is usually done with drafts in between the first and the final draft
- focuses on use of language, word choice, transition usage, brevity and/or wordiness, and more solid introductions and conclusions
- does focus on grammar, usage, and mechanics

## Proofreading

- is often confused with revising (though the two are drastically different)
- should be reserved for the final draft (deal with larger-scale issues first)
- focuses solely on grammar, usage, and mechanics - check for spelling, punctuation, format, usage, typographical errors, and inconsistencies

As you can see, there are distinctions among revising, editing, and proofreading...and isn't it a relief to know you aren't responsible for doing them all at once? For further information, consult Chapter 4 of the Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers, Fifth Edition (from which the information on this handout was taken).