

Grades K-3

Why Use This Tip

Revising and editing are two important parts of the writing process, but they can be tricky for children (and even adults) to understand. Prepare a child for editing and revising something he or she has written by going over the differences between the two: Revising involves making changes like adding or deleting words, reorganizing sentences or ideas, and sometimes responding to comments from other readers. Editing involves reviewing spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and grammar, and correcting any mistakes. Once a child begins to understand that revising and editing are different but equally important—and that they don't have to happen at the same time—he or she is ready to go back over a piece of writing and, with guidance, make it even better!

What To Do

1. Start by explaining to a child that revising writing isn't a matter of having done something wrong: It's a chance to make something that's already great even better.
2. If you're working with a child who has just started to write, the revising and editing process will be simpler. Start by reading the child's piece aloud to him or her exactly as it is written, having the child listen for the following things: Are any words missing? Are any important facts or events missing?
Once the child has addressed these two questions, read the piece aloud again, and ask him or her to think about whether it has a beginning, middle, and end. If any of these three things is missing, have the child write them. Next, ask the child to reread the piece and ask the following questions: Are there any words I think I might not have spelled correctly? Do I capitalize proper nouns, like the names of people, pets, and places? Can I think of different words to replace ones that I used a lot?
Ask the child to underline words that he used more than once in a piece of writing. Then, using a thesaurus, dictionary, or word list, help find different words to replace the underlined words some of the time. You can also use these tools to check spelling and capitalization.
3. With a child who has more writing experience, you should do all of the things listed in Step 2. But when you first read the piece aloud to him or her, you might also ask him or her to think about the following revising questions: Do I describe what my characters look like? Do I describe what my characters feel? Do I use the right action words with my nouns? Ask the child to fill in any details he or she may have left out.
Before you start editing with a more experienced writer, you might start by taking a close look at the piece of writing. Have the child reread the piece and think about the order of sentences and paragraphs. You might ask him or her to think about whether reordering one or two sentences helps communicate an idea more logically. Ask if ideas are repeated in the same paragraph. If so, is there a way to make the point once? Finally, have the child check that each paragraph has one main idea.
Now it's time to edit the piece for spelling and grammar. As with a less experienced writer, you should check for misspelled words and capitalization. Have the writer also check for apostrophes in contractions and possessives, fixing any mistakes he or she finds.
4. No matter what the child's ability level, it may be helpful for him or her to read through the piece several times, focusing on one revising or editing job with each reading. For example, during one pass, she would only check description. During another pass, she would focus on spelling, and so on.
5. Every writer should hold off on editing and revision until a first draft is finished. Doing either while writing can slow down the process. If a child is having trouble coming up with just the right word or sentence, suggest coming back to it later.
6. Want to give your young writer some revising practice? Learning how to communicate the same thing in different ways, depending on your audience, can be a good way to do this. You might ask a child to write a letter to a good friend about what she did the day before. Then ask her to write another letter about the same thing, this time to a parent or grandparent. Talk about any differences in word choice and tone between the two letters.
7. Don't forget the power of publication! Having the child print or type a neat final copy that you then have him or her illustrate, turn into a book, or hang on the wall will show a child the importance of revising and editing to create his or her best work.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/tips-howtos/help-child-edit-revise-30594.html>

