

HOW I  
**SELF-REVISED**  
 MY **DISSERTATION**

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*An academic editor takes you through the process of reworking the draft, chapter by chapter*

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## FOREWORD

*Everything I describe in this presentation reflects my experience with revising my own dissertation. While every project is different, I hope my method is useful to you.*

*Only someone familiar with your work can give precise feedback regarding its argument and structure. To incorporate the potentially contradictory feedback of your advisors, peers, and editors, you must have a method for self-revision.*

*Keeping your own goals for the project in mind, I suggest that you approach your material on your own terms and only after you have set it (and others' feedback) aside for a while to achieve some distance.*

*Now let's move forward!*

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## DIAGNOSIS

*Do this before you send a draft to your committee. Reread and notice where the document is successful and where it struggles.*

MY DRAFT

- *Poorly integrated quotes*
- *Background paraphrased from other sources*
- *Lengthy stretches of analysis*
  - *Poorly organized*

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## ABSORPTION

*Revisit (or read for the first time) feedback from committee and other helpful critics.*

MY DRAFT

- *Readers with very different concerns*
- *Fundamental argument issues*
- *Need for clarification and some research*
  - *Superficial flaws*

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## DISSECTION

*Read through a chapter and note every new subject.  
Underline every potential thesis or subthesis.*

### MY DRAFT

- *Prevalent stream-of-consciousness organization*
  - *One- to two-sentence tangents*
- *Plenty of subarguments without clear relationship to one another*

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## LISTS

*List all subjects and create a separate list for all theses.*

### MY DRAFT

- *Two dozen theses*
- *Twice as many subjects*
- *Some theses and subjects recurrent but not together*

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## NESTING

*Sketch the argument by mind-mapping all of the theses.  
Engineer a hierarchy of theses.  
Create a linear thesis outline that walks the reader  
through the argument as it builds.*

### MY DRAFT

- *One umbrella thesis for the chapter*
- *Several subtheses that needed to be linked*
  - *Argument-driven outline*

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## FLESHING OUT

*Arrange subjects in service of the newly outlined  
argument.*

### MY DRAFT

- *Better chunked topics*
- *Cherished transitions fallen by wayside*

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## COPY & PASTE

*Actually move material in accordance with new argument-driven outline.*

*Conduct any newly necessary research.*

### MY DRAFT

- *Natural transitions (rewritten)*
- *Tighter use of source material*
- *Thorough discussions*

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## REPRINTS

*Reprint the whole document.*

*Read with structure and flow in mind.*

*In service of argument, make broad adjustments along the way.*

*Compose new section headings that describe arguments, not topics.*

### MY DRAFT

- *Extraneous examples cut*
- *Most quotes paraphrased*
- *Tightened transitions*
- *Better signposts*

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## INCORPORATION

*Take each critic's feedback separately, verify that the newly restructured chapter addresses all concerns.*

### MY DRAFT

- *Time-consuming*
- *Advice clearly taken into account ...*
- *... and argument stronger for it!*

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## COPYEDITING

*Make those line-by-line edits.*

### MY DRAFT

- *Polished*
- *Comfortable ownership of my ideas*

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# CIRCULATION

*Send to colleagues, mentors, and friends for feedback.*

## MY DRAFT

- *Leaps and bounds from previous version*
  - *End in sight!*

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# PARTING WORDS

*Decide what's best for you, your research, and your timetable.*

*Create your own revision method.*

*Let me know how it goes!*

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# FREE RESOURCES

*For guides and tools to help you revise, see the blog post announcing this video at*

*<http://www.tweedediting.com/2011/07/revising>*

- *Guide to academic style*
- *List of verbs to use instead of "argue," "state," etc.*
- *Cover-sheet template for soliciting critique*
  - *Newsletter*

THANKS FOR WATCHING!

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