

HOW I
SELF-REVISED
 MY **DISSERTATION**

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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