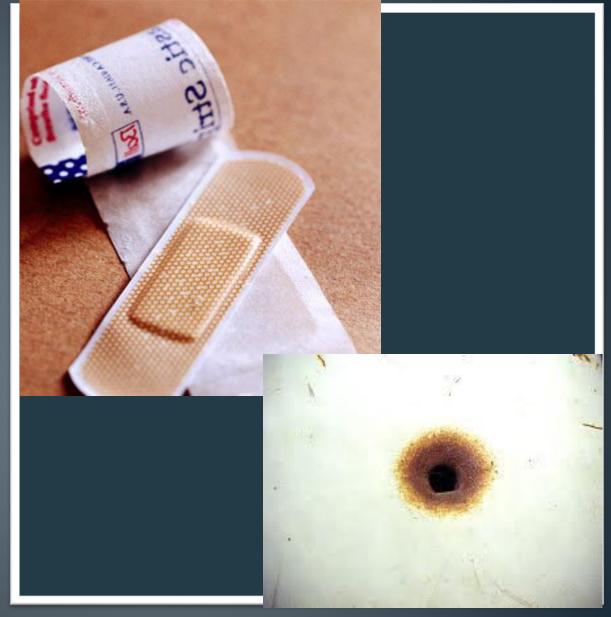


How to revise...

Don't put a band aid on a bullet hole.



Adapted from: "Revising Drafts," UNC Writing Center handout, available at http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/revision.html, accessed March 2, 2011.

What does it mean to revise?

- Revision = "to see again"
- It is an ongoing process of rethinking the paper:
 - reconsidering your arguments
 - reviewing your evidence
 - refining your purpose
 - reorganizing your presentation
 - reviving stale prose.

In other words...

- What am I trying to say?
- What words will express it?
- Could I put it more shortly?
- Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?

Why is revision important?

- Writing is a process of discovery.
- Revision is a chance to look critically at what you've written to see:
 - If it's worth saying,
 - If it says what you wanted to say, and
 - If a reader will understand what you're saying.

So, what should I do?

- Early stages:
 - Let it rest
 - Think BIG
 - Check the focus, do you stay on track for the whole paper?
 - Think honestly about your thesis.
 - Is your purpose clearly stated in the introduction?
- Later stages:
 - Examine the balance
 - Did you keep your promises?
 - Check the organization: Is it logical? Would it work better in a different order? Do transitions ease the reader along? Do topic sentences introduce the paragraph?
 - Check the conclusion

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So, what should I do?

- Sentence level:
 - Use forceful verbs
 - Use fewer words
 - Look for repetition of words or phrases
 - Cut as many prepositional phrases as you can without losing your meaning:
 - There are several examples of the issue of integrity in Huck Finn.
 - Huck Finn repeatedly addresses the issue of integrity.
 - Check your sentence variety.
 - Aim for precision in word choice.
 - Look for and eliminate "It is..." "There are..." and all passive formations

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In other words...

- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- Never use the passive where you can use the active.
- Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
- Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
- Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.