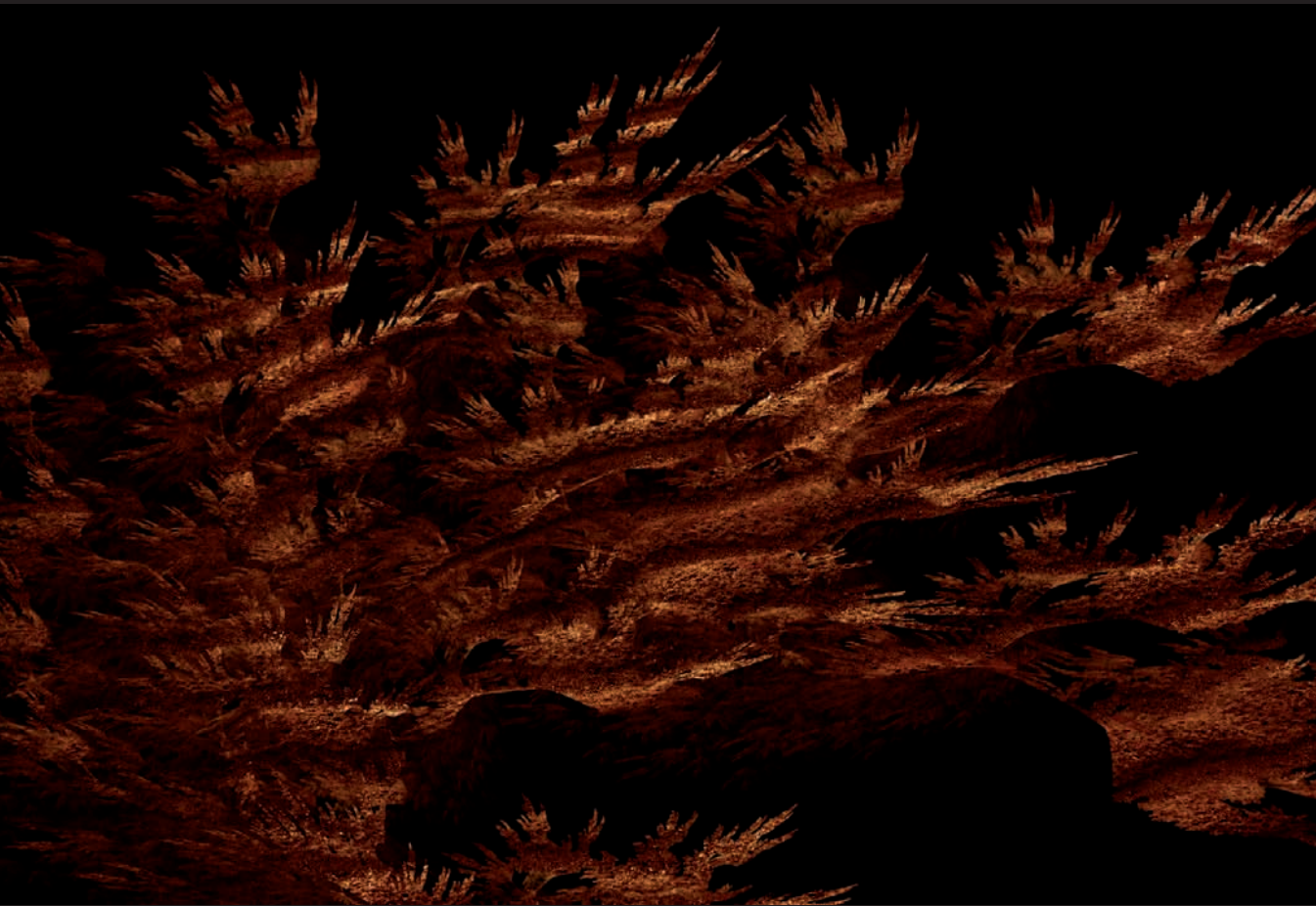


REASON TO WRITE



GINA L. VALLIS

Child: “I want it.”

(Appeal to *ethos*: child’s personal authority)

Parent: “No.”

Child: “Why?”

Parent: “Because I said so.”

(Appeal to *ethos*: parent’s personal authority).

In this conversation, the child attempts suasion by appealing to his or her personal authority, and the parent counters with superior authority. In other words, the parent quite simply pulls rank—no other explanation required.

Depending on the parent, any of the appeals that a child may attempt may have varying degrees of success in persuading the parent to act (to buy the ice cream cone for the child). In any case, it does demonstrate that humans start rhetoric early.

5 REVIEW

CHAPTER REVIEW

The information to take from this chapter is that the history and the meaning of the term *rhetoric* are often misunderstood. Rhetoric is foundational to the development of logic in Western discourse, in all areas of knowledge.

Rhetoric particularly concerns itself with *communication*, in whatever form that communication is offered. It defines communication by a series of five elements that must be present in order for communication to occur: *speaker*, *audience*, *vehicle*, *message*, and *intention*.

In its study of *argumentation*, rhetoric elucidates specific issues regarding the use of communication and *suasion*, whether persuasion or dissuasion, partly through an analysis of *appeals*. Appeals are broken down into three areas: an appeal to logic (*logos*), an appeal to emotion (*pathos*), and an appeal to the authority or credibility of the speaker (*ethos*). Rhetoric also identifies areas of the misuse of any of these appeals, either through error or deliberate deception on the part of the speaker. The misuse of an appeal is called a *fallacy*.

GRAMMAR REVIEW

The words *affect* and *effect* are often confused. Affect is the verb, as in “He *affected* her.” Effect is the noun, as in: “The *effect* was that she blushed.”

VOCABULARY REVIEW

argumentation

In formal logic/rhetoric, the elucidation of the process whereby one draws reasonable inferences from true premises, as in formal argumentation

appeals

In rhetoric, three basic ways in which a speaker may seek to produce belief or action in an audience through suasion, including dissuasion or persuasion

audience

In rhetoric, the receiver of a message, one of five elements necessary for communication to occur

communication

In rhetoric, defined as an act that, to qualify as communication, must involve a *speaker, audience, vehicle, message, and intention*. If the communication is designed to persuade, it can also involve what are called *appeals*

ethos

In rhetoric, one of three types of appeals. In this case, the appeal to personal credibility or authority of the speaker

fallacy

In rhetoric, the unsound or unethical use, either through error or deliberate deception, of an appeal

intention

In rhetoric, the element of communication that indicates the purpose of the speaker in conveying a message, one of five elements necessary for communication to occur

logos

In rhetoric, one of three types of appeals. In this case, the appeal to logic or sound reasoning

message

In rhetoric, the element of communication that indicates the content that is relayed from speaker to audience, and one of five elements necessary for communication to occur

pathos

In rhetoric, one of three types of appeals. In this case, the appeal to emotion

rhetoric

The study of logic and communication. From Aristotle, the study of such communication especially in regard to awareness of the most effective means of suasion in a given communication situation

speaker

In rhetoric, the element of communication that indicates the source of the message, whether that source is immediately present, or not, and one of five elements necessary for communication to occur

suasion

The attempted result, in a communicative act, of compelling belief or action in an audience, whether that result is one of persuasion or dissuasion

vehicle

In rhetoric, the element of communication that indicates the means by which the message is transmitted, whether that means is writing, speech, visual imagery, gesture, etc. and one of five elements necessary for communication to occur



CHAPTER 9

FEEDBACK AND REVISION

1	EVERYONE'S A CRITIC	186
2	ON BEYOND SPELLCHECK: EDITING VS. REVISION	188
3	MIRRORING DOCUMENTS	189
4	THE SECRET OF THE HARD-COPY EDIT	190
5	REVISION	190
	STEP 7 SELF-DIAGNOSTIC GUIDE.....	191

1 EVERYONE'S A CRITIC

The more that one writes, the more that one comes to appreciate the feedback of others. In fact, if one pursues advancement in academics, one gets to the point of soliciting criticism, because unless one can put a piece of writing away for a year, and then come back to it, there is no way to encounter one's own writing in a fresh way; one is just too close to it.

This proximity to your own writing will cause all sorts of mischief. It will allow you to fill in missing words that are not there, make leaps in logic that a typical reader cannot follow, and otherwise read the writing that is in your head, instead of the writing on the page. You understand what you mean. It's very difficult to get past that, in order to imagine what it would be like to be someone else trying to figure out what you mean.

The role of feedback in a writing draft is supposed to be helpful. However, its usefulness is dependent upon the way in which the feedback is presented, and also a degree of maturity on your part, in accepting and making use of that criticism. Criticism is quite simply a bit of a blow, no matter how well-phrased. It's a lot easier to understand why you bubbled in the wrong answer on a test. In writing feedback, things get a bit more complicated.

Feedback for an essay draft comes in levels: word level (spelling, word-choice), sentence level (syntax, grammar, word choice); organization level (the order of the presentation of the ideas); formalist level (formatting); content level (your analysis and conclusions). In a given course at university, one might just receive a grade, with no explanation. In a writing course, one would hope you would receive a more detailed response.

There are several ways in which writing instructors tend to respond to drafts. These include marginal comments, end-comments, rubrics, and 1:1 conferences. A rubric is simply a sheet that lists common areas for improvements, and gives you an idea which area you should work on for the final draft. Skip over none of it; respond to anything your instructor offers—they notice.

Instructors are, one assumes, invested in being helpful, but they are also justifying a grade. The idea would be that if one addresses all of the comments, (and understands them), the final product would receive a higher grade. The purpose of a writing course is to teach writing, and the final product is the measure the learning that has occurred. Remember that instructors must choose between the quality of the final product, in relationship to class standing, learning outcomes, and a student's improvement, over the course of the quarter, in determining that grade. In university courses, especially

if students are used to receiving high grades for their writing in high school, it can be quite surprising (and a bit unsettling) to receive a lower grade for the same work, in university. That is because one has moved to a new level of expectations.

There is no getting around the fact that instructors vary in those expectations. Almost all instructors tend to agree upon the quality of a given piece of academic writing, when they encounter it. This book aims toward identifying, and breaking down, for students, the elements that tend to generate that consensus, based upon published works. Yet just because instructors agree that a given published article displays a high degree of writing competence, this does not guarantee that they agree as to how to provide instruction in duplicating that quality. It's not particularly fair to have to shift your style of writing, or the rules that you are given, from course to course, but that is the reality of writing within the university.

As such, your job, as a student, is twofold: first, your job is to learn. Take what you can from instruction, and use your own judgment if it conflicts with other instruction you receive. It has to make sense to you. Your other job is to pay attention to the expectations of the instructor you are currently working with, and to follow them, even if you don't agree, or if it conflicts with other writing instruction you have received. Nor does it help to point out any discrepancy to your current instructor. Hopefully, you will get an instructor who is willing to explain his or her reasoning to you. It's even better if what she or he tells you actually makes sense.

Your best strategy for improving both your writing, and improving your grade, is to go to the instructor (or whoever issues the grade) and ask her or him, directly, and as politely as possible, what you can do to improve. Don't be confrontational or emotional. Push, if you have to, to get specifics. This is the job of an instructor; it's the reason office hours exist. The best time to do this is after your instructor has reviewed a sample of your writing, as in a draft. Most instructors will respond positively to this question, and will do their utmost to clarify their expectations.

Most of all, don't take criticism personally, and remember that, no matter what you have to do for a given course, this is your writing. It doesn't matter what you produce; it matters what you learn. If you encounter a course in which you don't feel you are learning, do what you have to do to provide a product that fulfills the criteria laid down by the instructor, and move on. Following instruction that doesn't make sense can only be for the purposes of receiving a desired grade; learning occurs when understanding attends that instruction.

At the same time, remain open to different views, because sometimes an approach to writing that you haven't encountered before can actually make a lot of sense. At one

point or another, the whole business of academic writing should fall into place, and at that point what you write is your own business.

To give an example of how writing instruction really works, the best single piece of writing instruction that I ever received was from a teaching assistant. It was a course in American Literature, and involved reading not only literary works from that period, but also critical essays that responded to that literature.

In speaking to the teaching assistant in charge of grading, I learned something that radically changed how I perceived the writing that I would perform for the rest of my student career. In that conversation, after she confirmed that I had read the essays on the readings, she simply said: “Write like that.”

Up to that point, it had never occurred to me that this was what was expected. Sometimes things just click. This one went straight to what I had been struggling to understand: the purpose of my writing efforts within the context of the university.

Over the years, as an instructor, I have witnessed many such pivotal moments, in interacting with students. I have also known a few students who have walked away from my office with little more than a vague plan of how to approximate what I was asking of them, in their writing. Because thinking and writing are so closely linked, a student’s response to instruction is as individualized as an instructor’s approach to teaching. The best thing to do is to try to find a good fit between your learning style and an instructor’s teaching style.

2 ON BEYOND SPELLCHECK: EDITING VS. REVISION

Editng a document, which involves identifying errors—checking for spelling mistakes, making sure formatting is correct, making sure words are not missing, etc.—is a student’s job, and should be completed within the draft stage, not in revision.

Instructors in university do not edit papers; they comment primarily on organization and content, for the purpose of global revision. In other words, nobody in university expects you to revise your draft by correcting spelling errors; the paper should not have been turned in this way, in the first place. An instructor may indicate editing problems in feedback, but a rewrite that involves merely editing your paper will probably not result in a higher grade. The only thing it might do is to prevent a failing grade.

Before you turn in a draft, run both spell-check and grammar-check. Don't rely on them—keep a dictionary and college handbook at hand, and, if you're not sure about something that has been flagged, look it up. Software checks are useful tools, but they are not foolproof. Never rely on a software program for formatting.

A rewrite is not about editing. Most of the time, it's about a global revision, and often an extension, of your original draft. A draft is not a finished product, and a final paper should be considerably different from what you originally submitted.

3 MIRRORING DOCUMENTS

In practical terms, there are two strategies that will help you to produce the most effective rewrite for a given draft that you produce. The first is what could be called *mirroring documents*.

If you perform a revision within your original document, you will miss two things: first, you will lose the opportunity to encounter your writing fresh, because you will be re-reading what you have already written. Second, you will lose the opportunity for eloquence: the way in which a point you make not only makes sense, but it particularly well-said.

Mirroring documents is a simple process. It involves calling up your original draft on your desktop, and moving it over to one side, while leaving it open. Then, call up a new blank document. Put them side-by-side. With your hard-copy feedback next to you, your original open in a document, and your blank document pre-formatted, the very best thing to do is to start from scratch. Anyone who has ever built a house will tell you that it is easier to start fresh construction than engage in a remodel, where you have to deal with existing material you are trying to replace, or change. For example, global revision may require a completely new opening. Mirroring documents allows you to construct that opening, while having your original readily available if you would like to refer to it.

For parts of the original draft with which you are pleased, and that work, there is the wonderful tool of cut and paste. This is especially helpful if you are moving around elements for a new organization, where elements that were once combined, but should not have been, can be selectively extracted to fit a new organization. Remember that input of new text creates the need for a new edit for small errors.

4 THE SECRET OF THE HARD-COPY EDIT

This may seem like a simple strategy, but it is actually quite important. A student once came to me because he was extremely frustrated with the grades he was receiving for writing in his courses. He had just turned in a draft for my course, and it was easy to understand why he was receiving these grades. It was not his ideas, which were very sound, nor his ability to think critically. It was not the way in which he organized his writing. It was, quite simply, that his paper was full of egregious editing errors.

In going over his draft, together, I asked him to read three sentences aloud. By the second sentence he expressed profound surprise: he *had* edited the paper. He had read it over several times. How could he have missed a sentence like: “It was for made the purpose of in constructing identity”? It was just so wrong—why hadn’t he caught it?

The answer is quite simple: he had edited the document onscreen. There is no answer, of which I am aware, as to why editing this way doesn’t work. Students who receive the highest grades in writing courses always know this secret: no matter how many times you have gone over a document, onscreen, it is always absolutely necessary to perform a hard-copy edit.

That means printing the document, sitting down with a pen in hand, and reading your prose off the page. If editing is an area in which you have had real difficulty, in the past, you can take it a step further: find somewhere private, and read it aloud.

Mark places in your copy where you find errors (and you will), and return to the screen to make the changes. Then you can print out a final copy. This particular student’s final essay was not only a fine critical essay, but was entirely free of editing errors, and his grades improved in all of his courses.

5 REVISION

Besides responding to instructor comments, performing adequate editing, mirroring documents, and doing a hard-copy edit, it can be helpful to review important issues covered within this text in order to self-diagnose any areas where one could improve, or to return to a given step and review it. On the following page, you will find a self-diagnostic. It is intended as a tool for self-evaluation, and not to force you to give yourself some kind of grade. The self-diagnostic helps a student to recognize that concentration on one or two areas, instead of “writing,” in general, can make a substantial difference in the quality of his or her writing.

STEP 7: SELF-DIAGNOSTIC GUIDE

# Issue	Very Good	Need to Improve	Issue for Revision
Critical Question			
Based on a Critical Question	_____	_____	_____
Contextualization			
Finds General/Specifics of question	_____	_____	_____
Definition			
Defines terms	_____	_____	_____
Analysis			
Gathers details	_____	_____	_____
Finds patterns	_____	_____	_____
Draws conclusions	_____	_____	_____
Organization			
Strong organizational principle	_____	_____	_____
Sources			
Emphasis on primary sources	_____	_____	_____
Secondary sources when needed	_____	_____	_____
Tone			
Tone works for publication	_____	_____	_____
Objective/Reasonable/Fair	_____	_____	_____
No emotional language	_____	_____	_____
No value judgments	_____	_____	_____
Complicates any binaries	_____	_____	_____
Is not opinion-based	_____	_____	_____
Deals with counterpoints	_____	_____	_____
Language Usage			
No "Wine-Bottle" Language	_____	_____	_____
No Adjectives	_____	_____	_____
No Generalizations	_____	_____	_____
Structure			
Title	_____	_____	_____
Paragraphs	_____	_____	_____
Mechanics			
1. Formatting	_____	_____	_____
Editing			
1. Editing (General)	_____	_____	_____
2. Specific Issue/s	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____