# Preparing to Revise and Edit a First Draft

When writers complete a first draft of a document, they might face a variety of barriers that prevent them from dedicating time and effort to revising or editing. Some writers face other deadlines or life commitments; others may actively avoid, refuse, or hesitate to engage in the rigorous process of revising or editing. Stopping at a first draft puts an end to drafting and deprives a writer of the chance to improve their revising/editing skills and receive feedback on their draft. Often, we need to revise or edit a draft to improve readers’ experiences with our document and help them engage with our content and ideas.

To ensure our writing processes do not end at the drafting stage, we need to reflect on the challenges of revising and editing a draft, as well as identify the strategies and resources that will help us address these challenges.

## Challenges of Revising and Editing

First, writers need to think about the challenges they face when revising or editing their drafts. If you are unlikely to make drastic changes when you revise or edit a draft, the below chart contains a list of questions to help you identify the challenges you might encounter.

### Psychological

* How comfortable are you with revising or editing your draft? What makes you comfortable? What doesn’t?
* Do you tend to give up easily on revising or editing your first draft? Why do you think that happens?
* What makes you lose interest or prevents you from revising or editing your draft? What motivates you to revise or edit your draft?

### Social

* Do you struggle to ask for feedback on your draft? Why?
* Do you find it difficult to understand and negotiate feedback from your advisor, mentor, or other reviewers? What makes it difficult?
* What frustrates you about the feedback you receive from others on your draft?

### Time Management

* How much time do you spend revising or editing your draft?
* What kind(s) of time constraints get in the way of revising or editing your draft?
* Do you usually come up with a clear plan to revise or edit your draft? If you do, what makes your plan successful? If you don’t, what stops you from setting a revising/editing plan?

## Activity: Identifying Challenges in Revising and Editing

**Learning objective: To help writers identify the different challenges they encounter when revising or editing their draft.**

For this activity, you are going to reflect on one of the challenges that hinder the process of revising or editing your draft. This activity will focus on the **psychological challenges** you might encounter when revising/editing.

**Directions**

Step 1: Think of a writing project you want to revise/edit. It could be your dissertation, a manuscript, seminar paper, etc. If you are still in your first or second year of your graduate program, think of a writing project you might be working to revise/edit in the future.

Step 2: Select **one** question you want to answer from the **psychological challenges**. Record your answers in the chart below.

You can continue to explore any of the challenges listed above and answer the designated list of questions as prompts for reflection before revising or editing.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Project | *What is the draft you want to revise or edit?* |
| Psychological | *Example*  ***What makes you lose interest or prevents you from revising or editing your draft? What motivates you to revise or edit your draft?***  I get overwhelmed when I want to revise or edit my draft because I don’t know where to start. I am also afraid of being judged, so I don’t revise my draft. Sometimes, I’m motivated to revise if there’s a deadline. |
|  |  |

## Intentional Revising and Editing

As a writer, you may each encounter individual and unique challenge based on your situation and needs. Now that you are aware of the individual challenges you might face when revising or editing your draft, you can be more intentional about identifying strategies and resources to help you address these challenges.

The questions in the previous activity help you figure out how to become aware of the challenges to revising or editing your draft. The questions in the following activity will help you identify possible strategies and allocate helpful resources that will guide you to be more cognizant of the challenges of revising/editing and work to overcome them.

## Activity: Identifying Strategies and Resources to Address Challenges

**Learning objective: To help writers identify possible strategies and allocate resources to address challenges they face when revising or editing a draft.**

**Directions**

Use the same writing project you chose in the first activity and select one category of challenges, such as psychological or social. You could choose the same category we used in the previous activity or select a different challenge. Answer the questions designated for the category of your choice. Record your answers in the table below.

As you grow as a writer, keep track of the resources you find helpful to address the challenges of revising and editing and become more intentional about revising or editing your draft. The table on the next page can be used to record strategies and resources that you can come back to when you find yourself feeling stuck, hesitant, or unwilling to revise and edit your draft.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Project | *What is the draft you want to revise or edit?* |
| Psychological | *How can you address some of the psychological challenges you identified? What resources can you use? Who can you talk to to find more resources?* |
| Social | *How can you address some of the social challenges you identified? What resources can you use? Who can you talk to to find more resources?* |
| Time Management | *How can you address some of the time management challenges you identified? What resources can you use? Who can you talk to to find more resources?* |

## Activity: Preparing to Revise and Edit a Draft

**Learning objective: To help writers feel more prepared to begin with their revising or editing process and engage in an intentional state of revising and editing.**

After identifying helpful strategies and resources, writers can begin to address their challenges by preparing themselves to begin revising and editing their document.

Writers need to think about the purpose behind revising their document, their document’s strengths and points of potential improvement, revising/editing priorities, and time allocated to revising/editing.

**Directions**

Once you draft a document you want to revise and edit, the following questions will help you to start planning for the revising/editing stage. You can skim your document to help you answer the questions below.

1. Why do you want to revise or edit this document?
2. What do you like about your document? Jot down two to three things you like.
3. What do you think could be improved about your document? Jot down two to three things you like.
4. If you could choose your two top priorities for revising or editing, what would they be?
   1. What would you revise first?
   2. What would you revise next?
5. How long do you think it will take you to revise and edit your document?