Revision Guide – Part 1, Global Revision

1. **The thesis and purpose:** Paraphrase the thesis as a promise: "In this paper, I will...." Does the draft fulfill that promise? Why or why not? Does it fulfill the writer's major purposes? Are the terms clear and succinct enough for the reader? Should the writer sharpen the wording? Do any of the terms seem vague or too abstract? Should the writer define them? Is the thesis strong enough? Have you cued the reader as to what specific path your paper is going to take?

2. **The supporting points:** List the main points, in order of presentation. Then number them in order of interest to you. Review them one by one. Do any need to be explained more fully or less fully? Should any be eliminated? Are some of them really the same? Do any seem confusing or boring? Do any make you want to know more? How well are the main points supported by evidence, examples, or details?

3. Identify the best section of the composition and describe what makes it effective.

4. Identify one (or two) things the writer can do to improve their next draft. Write these goals on the first page at the top.

5. What were the goals the writer was working on? Were they reached? If not, identify those passages that need improvement and as a group revise those sections, writing final versions on the back of the paper.

6. Identify a sentence, a group of sentences, or a paragraph that needs revision, and revise it as a group, writing the final version on the back of the paper.

7. **The assignment:** Does the draft carry out the assignment? What could the writer do to better fulfill the assignment? For example, if you have narrowed the topic down from the question you are supposed to be answering, be sure to justify this move--why does analyzing this particular example answer the issues raised by the larger question? Do you continue to connect your argument back to the question asked (for example, in the conclusion)?

8. **The title and introduction:** Does the title tell the reader what the draft is about? Does it catch the reader's interest? How? What does the opening accomplish? How else might the writer begin?

9. **The organization:** What kind of overall organization plan is used--spatial, chronological, or some other plan? Are the points presented in the most useful order? What, if anything, might be moved? Can you suggest ways to make the connections between paragraphs clearer and easier to follow?

10. **The paragraphs:** Which paragraphs are clearest and most interesting to read, and why? Which ones are well developed? How are they developed? Which paragraphs need further development? What kind of information seems to be missing?
Revision Guide - Part 2, Sentences, Words, Audience, Writer, and Appearance

1. **The sentences:** Choose three sentences you consider the most interesting or the best written--stylistically effective, entertaining, or otherwise memorable. Then choose three sentences you see as weak--confusing, awkward, and uninspired. Are the sentences varied in length, structure, and openings?

2. **The words:** Mark words that are particularly effective, that draw vivid pictures or provoke strong responses. Then mark words that are weak, vague, or unclear. Do any words need to be defined? Are verbs active and vivid? Are any words potentially offensive, to the intended audience or anyone else?

3. **The rhetorical stance:** Where does the writer stand on the issues involved in the topic? Is the writer an advocate or critic? What words or phrases in the draft indicate the stance? Where does the writer's stance come from? That is, what influences are likely to have contributed to that stance? What is the overall effectiveness of this stance?

4. **The audience:** How does the draft capture the interest of and appeal to the intended audience?

5. **The tone:** What dominant impression does the draft create--serious, humorous, satiric, persuasive, passionately committed, highly objective? Mark specific places where the writer's voice comes through most clearly. Is the tone appropriate to the topic and the audience? Is it consistent throughout? If not, is there a reason for its being varied?

6. **The conclusion:** Does the draft conclude in a memorable way, or does it seem to end abruptly or trail off into vagueness? If you like the conclusion, explain why. How else might it end?

7. **Final thoughts:** What are the main strengths and weaknesses in the draft? What surprised you and why? What was the single most important thing said? What do you want to know more about?

8. **Appearance:** Does the upper left heading include author, instructor, class, assignment number, and date? Is the essay the required length? Is the draft double spaced throughout? Is the font big enough? Are there page numbers in the upper right corner with the author's name (i.e., Smith 2)? Do the direct quotations have parenthetical page references? Are long quotes (more than 3 lines) indented from both sides? Are paraphrases or summaries of other writers' ideas attributed to those authors? Are there numerous errors in spelling and usage?
Revision Guide – “Please Don’t…”

1. The "there are many problems and many answers" copout. That is the definition of an issue, not a specific analysis of one. Your job is to evaluate the positions and tell us what is important here, and why. You don't have to propose solutions, but you can--if you think you have some that solve the key problems you have identified and you have convinced us that they matter.

2. Countering the counter argument. If you have included consideration of the rebuttal to your argument, leaving it unevaluated simply contradicts yourself and confuses your audience--tell us why, even though the other side may have valid concerns, your position is the better one.

3. When you use "obviously." Check to see if your reasoning is actually logical and easy for the reader to follow, and that it's not just obvious to you. If you feel it is, then check to see if you are using this "obvious" point to go on and make another one. Otherwise, skip the whole thing. Finally, consider getting rid of the word "obviously."

4. Obvious statements such as "education is a learning process." (No kidding, really?) Is that really what you wanted to say? Expand on this and use specific language to make your point so the reader doesn't have to guess that you might be trying to say something more meaningful. If helps to put your general remark into the specific context of the issue, i.e.: "In evaluating tracking as an educational strategy, we need to keep in mind that, although formal education is organized into progressive levels, learning is an ongoing process that proceeds at different rates, and indeed is never really finished." Then you must go on to tie this point into your thesis so the reader understands why you are talking about this: "For this reason, so that tracking helps, and does not hinder students, it is essential that tracking be flexible so that it is responsive to their changing needs and abilities."

5. Introductions that start with "the purpose of this paper is," conclusions that start with "in conclusion," and paragraphs that start with "another example is." These kinds of transitions are not only awkward and boring, but usually indicate that you are not arguing your thesis in a thoughtful way, but writing a 5-paragraph essay.

6. Mysterious acronyms. If you use acronyms (such as ESL, SAT, GATE), the first time you mention it use the whole phrase (such as "English as a Second Language") and the put the acronym (ESL) in parenthesis after the phrase. This is also true of other key words and phrases: make sure we know what it means by defining it for yourself. You may be using terms somewhat differently than the ways others usually think of them, which is often actually a very good way of making an argument; distinguishing the "right" and "wrong" way to think about a thing, insisting on your definition because….

7. Long paragraphs (more than 3/4 of a page) usually indicate that the paragraph has more than one purpose and should be reorganized and split up.