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This checklist is offered as a supplement to ***Teaching and Mentoring Writers in the Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach*** (published in 2025 by the University of Chicago Press). You can order from the publisher tinyurl.com/MentoringWriters or you can sign up for occasional emails with updates about the book tinyurl.com/MentoringWritersUpdates.

Also relevant: Heard's book ***The Scientist's Guide to Writing: How to Write More Easily and Effectively Throughout Your Scientific Career***. You can order a copy from the publisher tinyurl.com/ScientistsGuide, or from the evil corporate giant (usually cheaper) tinyurl.com/GuideRiver.

Heard maintains a curated list of writing resources (blogs, books, software, etc): scientistseessquirrel.wordpress.com/writing-resources/. Merkle's blog https://schoolofgoodtrouble.substack.com/ has a ton of writing and mentoring resources too!

Checklist for Creating a Revision Plan

If you keep the developmental stages handout close by (and potentially even provide a copy to your students), you can use it and this checklist to stay focused on the immediate next revision steps the writer needs to take.

- ☐ Remember that **you're *coaching* the student**, not merely editing their writing. Your aim is to help the student become a better writer (not merely polish some text).
- ☐ Unless you have personal meetings with students, **you are providing advice *through your own writing***. Frame revision suggestions as *how* to revise, not just *what* to revise. (See Revision Plan Examples on the next page; see also the feedback handout.)
- ☐ **Provide unqualified praise where it's deserved**[1], **as well as specific critical feedback** (see feedback handout for examples).
- ☐ **Don't try to address every problem in the writing in one interaction**; instead, consciously pick your battles knowing that a student cannot address every issue in a revision either. (Refer to the developmental stages handout to guide your focus.)
- ☐ **Teach *one* problem-centered lesson in each instructional interaction** about the *most significant*, or core, writing concern (e.g., a grammatical glitch, incomplete sentences, inaccuracies, flow/organization, missing content).
- ☐ Make sure that **each task is clearly explained and doable in the next revision** draft. Consider writing a checklist the student can follow to keep track.
- ☐ Close with a positive statement to **encourage a visit to your office hours, and/or welcome another draft** submission.

[1] While you should only praise things that warrant it, you can virtually always find something genuine to praise in a draft (e.g., a novel idea, expressive phrasing, apt vocabulary, improvements from the previous draft).

Revision Plan Examples

The following are two examples of direct, specific revision advice provided to a student. For more detailed examples, see the feedback handout.

1. **Focus on advancing your argument at each step in this paper.** In order for a reader to understand your ideas thoroughly, you will want to revise to help them fully see the connections between your ideas. First, make sure your topic sentences connect to your thesis (aka overall argument). Next, think of your topic sentences like building blocks — they should transition or advance the reader from the ideas in the previous paragraph to the points/arguments you're making in the next paragraph. I used blue highlighting to help you identify places where you can make better connections. For your next draft, use the advice I just gave you here to revise those spots.

   [OPTIONAL EXPLANATION TO INCLUDE: There are a couple of reasons it matters to make the connections of your ideas so clear for a reader: (1) the reader isn't in the classroom with us, so they don't know what we know. You have to tell them all the context/connections they need to know. (2) Just like you, a reader is busy and distracted. If they have to try very hard to understand our writing, they will probably just get frustrated. A frustrated reader is instinctively more resistant to our ideas, even if they don't realize it. Since we're trying to help the reader, we want to make it easy for them to understand and hopefully agree with them.]

2. **Practice using your sources to make *your* point**, rather than just paraphrasing the content from the source. While you sometimes do provide clear examples of how your sources support your own ideas, this draft mostly just reports on things your sources have said. In your next draft, revise to use more specific, direct citations in order to support *your* point. For example, sometimes, you just need one more sentence of explanation to make it clear that you are *building on* your sources' ideas, not just telling the reader about the sources. This shift will make your own ideas more clear and compelling to the reader.

   [OPTIONAL EXPLANATION TO INCLUDE: Remember that our goal with our writing is to *join* the conversation in our field, not just report on it. If all we do is repeat what others have said, people might wonder why we're writing at all. So, even though it can feel scary to "speak up" through our writing, that's what is expected of a developing scientist.]