

The background features a collage of images: a stack of papers in the top left, a pen nib in the bottom left, and a circular logo in the top right. The colors are vibrant, with purple, pink, green, and yellow sections.

Editing Strategies

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Introduction


Today's workshop has two main goals:

- identify the five most common editing myths
- discuss ways to maximize editing effectiveness

Editing Myths

Myth One: I should edit my work as I go, stopping frequently to make corrections.

Rationale: I should edit my work early on, while I am creating the original document. I should stop writing as soon as I discover an error and correct it **immediately**.



Myth One: I should edit my work as I go, stopping frequently to make corrections.

This is a myth because creating the original document is a lot of hard work that demands your full attention. If you interrupt yourself every four words to correct a comma or a misspelled word, you will interrupt the creative process. It is better to edit your work after you have an original draft of something written. Professional writers let a lot of errors go by while they are generating their drafts; these writers know that “clean-up” comes later in the process.



Myth Two: I should edit right after I finish writing my document.

Rationale: I should edit my work the minute I finish writing, when my ideas are still “fresh” in my mind and I am in a writing zone/frame of mind. This way, I will most likely see my errors.

A vertical stack of four images on the left side of the slide. From top to bottom: a clock with a blue face and black hands on a red background; a clock with a yellow face and black hands on a blue background; an open book with white pages and a dark cover on a green background; and a closed book with white pages and a dark cover on a purple background.


Myth Two: I should edit right after I finish writing my document.

Actually, one of the worst times to edit work is right after you wrote it. Your mind is probably somewhat fatigued, and your memory will often “see” what you meant to write, not what you actually wrote. It is best to edit your work with a fresh perspective, ideally the next day or after an hour or two. Of course, this takes careful planning and budgeting of time.




Myth Three: The best way to edit is to read and re-read and re-re-read and re-re-re-read and (aw, you get the idea) my document.

Rationale: To edit successfully, I should read my paper over and over again, from beginning to end. If I do this enough times, the errors will eventually “pop” out at me, and I will see them.




Myth Three: The best way to edit is to read and re-read and re-re-read and re-re-re-read and (aw, you get the idea) my document.

Reading a document over will certainly help you find *some* errors. However, unless you know what you're looking for, you won't find them all. The best strategy is to read your document once for basic coherence. Then, read your paper again, each time looking for *a particular kind of error*. In this way, use each reading as a sort of "search and destroy" mission.



Myth Four: Spelling and grammar computer programs will catch all of my errors.

Rationale: Computers are really sophisticated these days, so all I have to do is run a spell-check program and the grammar-check program, and they will find all of my problems. I should always believe what these programs suggest and click “yes” no matter what.




Myth Four: Spelling and grammar computer programs will catch all of my errors.

Computers really *are* sophisticated, but the English language is even more sophisticated. A spelling program doesn't look at context; it merely looks at spelling. If a word is spelled correctly, it is "approved." For example, such a program won't distinguish among words like the following:

Myth Four: Spelling and grammar computer programs will catch all of my errors.




affect effect a fact	they're their there	two to too
aisle isle I'll	your you're yore	it's its
I eye	you ewe	whether weather




Myth Four: Spelling and grammar computer programs will catch all of my errors.

Grammar software sometimes requires a great deal of knowledge to use. A writer should *never* click on the “yes” option without clearly understanding what is being suggested. Often, clicking “yes” will not only make the problem bigger, it will often make the writing incoherent!

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Myth Five: I make so many errors in my writing, I will never find them all or learn this stuff.

In almost 25 years of teaching, I have never met a writer who makes *every possible error*. Rather, writers make errors in *patterns*. Even accomplished writers make the same types of errors. The goal of a writer is to do the following:




Myth Five: I make so many errors in my writing, I will never find them all or learn this stuff.

1. Identify the errors you are most commonly making (the Writing Lab can help!)
2. Keep track of these errors on an index card, in a notebook, on your cell phone, or anywhere else you can refer to.

A vertical stack of four images. The top image is a clock with a blue face and black hands, set against a red background. The second image is a clock with a yellow face and black hands, set against a blue background. The third image is an open book with white pages, set against a green background. The bottom image is a closed book with white pages, set against a purple background.

Myth Five: I make so many errors in my writing, I will never find them all or learn this stuff.

3. Read your work looking for a particular *kind* of error (common spelling mistakes, commas, sentence fragments – whatever your pattern).
4. Focus on the most common error patterns first. You can't learn everything at once.



Myth Five: I make so many errors in my writing, I will never find them all or learn this stuff.

5. If you don't understand a pattern or how to fix it, use The Writing Lab. It is our job to help you identify and understand patterns of error.
6. Remember that grammar and mechanics *do* count because when used well, they showcase your other writing talents and abilities. When not used well, they distract or confuse readers.



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Read your writing aloud, whether it is to yourself or to another person. Reading into a digital recorder or your cell phone is helpful as well. Many errors are discovered because they simply sound awkward as you are saying them or as you are listening back.

Some writers suggest reading a text *backwards*, one sentence at a time, to really focus on sentence-level clarity and correctness.



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Give yourself some time between writing and editing your work, even if it is only an hour. If you try to edit immediately after composing, your eye might “see” what your mind remembers or thinks should be present. It is better to get a fresh start.

Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Try to do a different activity in between writing your assignment and editing it. Again, the goal here is to “wipe your memory clean” of what you wrote so that you can look at your work with a fresh pair of eyes. Playing basketball, working on math problems, watching TV for 30 minutes can actually help you when you finally sit down to edit.



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Train yourself to use word-processing software, especially software that has "spell check" or grammar check programs. However, don't rely on spelling or grammar programs to catch all of the errors. Spell check programs will allow any correctly spelled word to "go by," even if **its** it's **knot**-not the **write** right word **four** for what **ewe** you **knead** need. Grammar programs often offer suggestions that simply aren't correct in your particular situation.



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Keep track of the kinds of errors you make. You might have problems with only a few errors, such as semicolon errors and confusing their/there/they're. Keeping track of your errors helps you find them more easily.



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

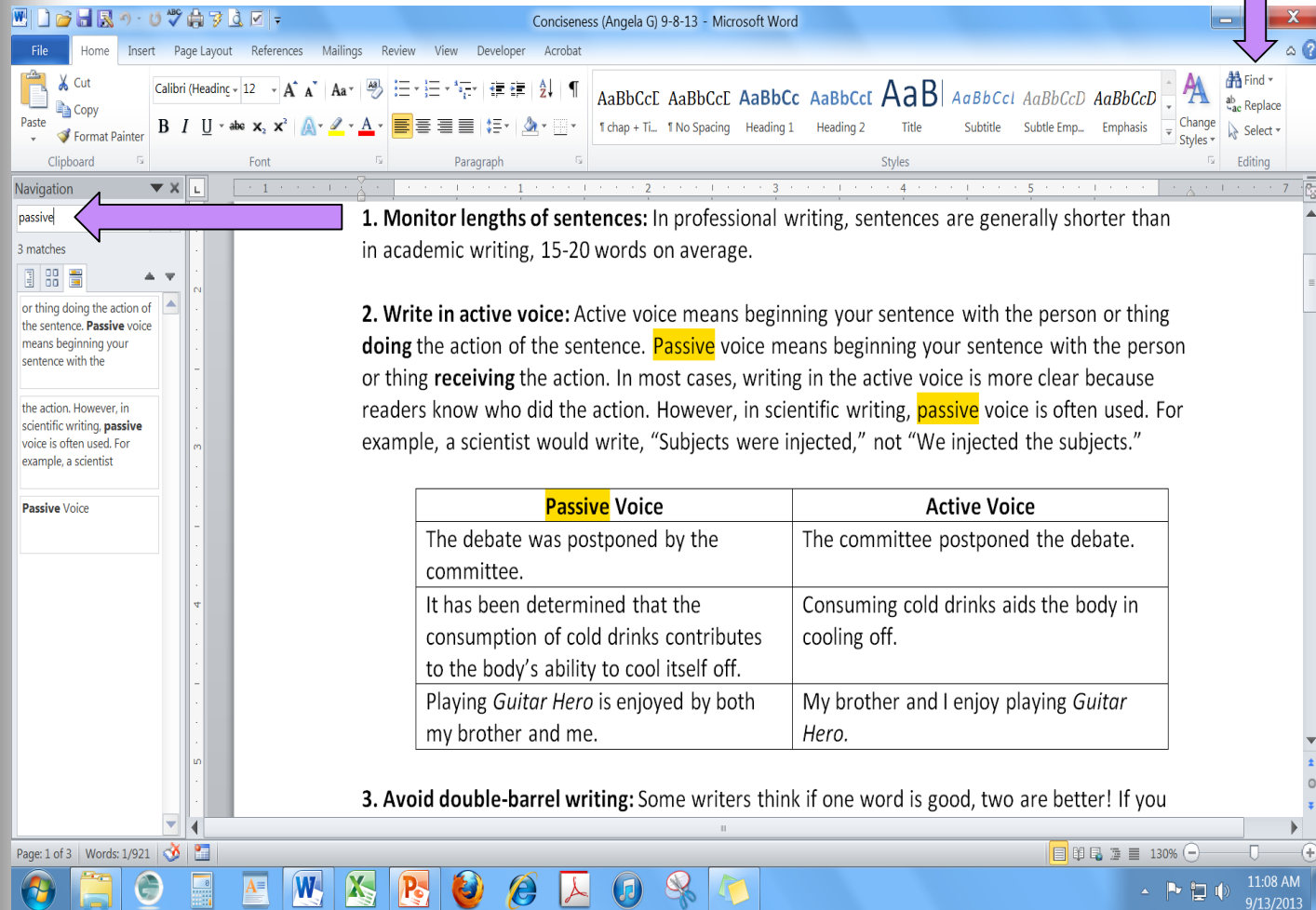
Proofread a paper more than once, each time looking for a specific type of error, particularly those you tend to make. Read an entire paper looking just for spelling errors and obvious typos. Then read for sentence-level errors. Continue looking for one error at a time.



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Use a “Find” program to help you search for punctuation or other potential errors. Many software programs come with a “Find” feature. You can type in something you often misuse, such as a colon, and the computer will find every example of that element in the document. The computer won’t correct the error, but it will point out where you are using that element, and you can double-check your work for correctness.

Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document titled "Conciseness (Angela G) 9-8-13". The ribbon includes File, Home, Insert, Page Layout, References, Mailings, Review, View, Developer, and Acrobat. The Font section shows Calibri (Heading) 12. The Paragraph section shows 1 chap + TL... 1 No Spacing. The Styles section shows AaBbCcL, AaBbCcE, AaBbCc, AaBbCcC, AaB, AaBbCcI, AaBbCcD, AaBbCcD. The Navigation pane on the left shows "passive" with 3 matches. The main text area contains two numbered tips. A table compares passive and active voice. The status bar at the bottom shows Page: 1 of 3, Words: 1/921, and a taskbar with various application icons.

1. **Monitor lengths of sentences:** In professional writing, sentences are generally shorter than in academic writing, 15-20 words on average.

2. **Write in active voice:** Active voice means beginning your sentence with the person or thing **doing** the action of the sentence. **Passive** voice means beginning your sentence with the person or thing **receiving** the action. In most cases, writing in the active voice is more clear because readers know who did the action. However, in scientific writing, **passive** voice is often used. For example, a scientist would write, "Subjects were injected," not "We injected the subjects."

Passive Voice	Active Voice
The debate was postponed by the committee.	The committee postponed the debate.
It has been determined that the consumption of cold drinks contributes to the body's ability to cool itself off.	Consuming cold drinks aids the body in cooling off.
Playing <i>Guitar Hero</i> is enjoyed by both my brother and me.	My brother and I enjoy playing <i>Guitar Hero</i> .

3. **Avoid double-barrel writing:** Some writers think if one word is good, two are better! If you



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Form study groups in your classes and regularly review each other's work. Because you are completing the same assignments as others in these classes, you are in a good position to assist each other in revising and editing work.



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Use “sticky” notes to mark spots in your writing handbook and/or dictionary. Learning how to use a writing handbook or dictionary is a skill critical to success. Save yourself some energy by highlighting those areas you return to. Little sticky notes and “flags” work well.



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Use available technology to assist you. Bookmark online dictionaries or writing handbooks so you can access information quickly. Search for apps that assist with grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics.



Ways to Maximize Editing Effectiveness

Make use of the Writing Lab. The Writing Lab (D120) will help by teaching how to edit your own work. However, the Writing Lab will not edit work for you.



Final Thoughts

The best way to edit work is to know what you are looking for and to choose your battles: focus on those errors you are most frequently making. Let the Writing Lab in D120 help you with this and other writing needs. Good Luck!