**Editing Your Paper**

1. Underline your thesis. Is it in the first paragraph? Does your thesis have a broad enough idea that it covers everything you wrote about in your essay? Does it have a specific, arguable point?
2. Read your conclusion to see if the thesis idea is stated more completely and clearly there. Consider moving it to the introductory paragraph of your essay if it’s a better thesis statement.
3. Read JUST the topic sentence of each and all body paragraphs. Do they clearly connect to and develop the idea of your thesis? They should be sub-points of your main point. You may need to revise your thesis or your topic sentences.
4. Topic sentences (so called because they introduce THE topic that you will discuss in this area of the paper) should give the reader an overview of what the paragraph will cover. They should also make a point or claim about that topic. Do you need to revise the topic sentences to better state the main idea of the paragraph?
5. Now look at the particular order of the paragraphs. Why this order? Are they chronological? In order of importance? Steps in a process? Strongest argument to weakest? Does the order need to be changed to build in natural transition?
6. Transition needs to be used between paragraphs and within paragraphs. To signal the connections between paragraphs, use the first sentence of the new paragraph to show how the previous paragraph’s main point connects to the new point. Clue: use words from the previous concluding sentence with the new idea in your topic sentence. “Not only is the lack of judicial discretion a problem with mandatory sentencing (previous paragraph’s point), but recidivism is also a significant result of such sentencing (this paragraph’s main topic)."
7. Read the sentences within each paragraph. Do the sentence logically flow from one to the next? Clue: read a sentence and ask yourself what does it lead the reader to expect next? Did you put that in the next sentence? Be sure not to just repeat an idea in different words. Get more specific, deeper, more analytical as your analysis progresses.
8. When you use details from the text and/or a quote, make sure to analyze (how it works, why is this important, what insight do we gain) that material. Don’t just drop a quote into your paper.
9. Cut any passage that does not support your thesis or topic sentence. Cut the weakest details to give greater power to the strongest information. Sometimes less is more. In addition, be sure your ideas are well-developed. Clue: two questions to ask yourself: Did you give clear, specific examples? Did you tell your reader what, how, why it is important?
10. Make your writing crystal clear. The ideas must be clear in your head before you can carefully make them clear for your reader. Clue: use shorter words, sentences, and paragraphs at points of complexity. Clue: don’t just repeat significant words, but go deeper into the subject matter. Use specific and concrete language and examples.