

Revision of one (1) Cognitive Science Writing Assignment
Due date: Noon on December 19, 2008 (the last day of Finals)

“If you can’t write clearly, you probably don’t think nearly as well as you think you do.”
-Kurt Vonnegut

Goals for this *OPTIONAL* assignment:

- Understand that writing is a *process* not a *product*.
- Reflect on your answer to a writing assignment and try to improve it given the comments and suggestions that were provided to you when the paper was initially submitted.
- **NOT** to “get more points to help my grade.”

Instructions:

- 1) You may elect to revise *one* of the following writing assignments: 1, 3, 5a, 6, or 9.
- 2) Hand in the original document (with my comments and suggestions included); you should keep a copy for yourself (either scan the document or photocopy it before handing it in).
- 3) Hand in the revised document.

Please note that “revising” an essay does not mean that you simply “re-print” the essay after running a program to check your spelling and grammar (something that you should have been done the first time you submitted it!). Rather, the process of revision can be performed at a shallow level or at a deeper level. You may choose to do a very shallow revision of one writing assignment, but for maximum impact on your final grade, I strongly recommend undertaking a deeper, more substantive revision of your answer.

Simply adding to what you have already written by answering the parts of the question that you overlooked the first time...	...will result in a minimal increase in your initial grade.
Providing a complete and correct answer with no stylistic errors (i.e., grammar and spelling) that flows logically from point to point using smooth transition statements with small improvements in the overall organization...	...will result in a moderate increase in your initial grade.
Significantly restructuring your answer...	...will result in a significant increase in your initial grade.

How do I significantly restructure my answer?

Reflect on what you have written and reconceptualize the entire answer. That is, look at your answer in a new way. Sometimes when we look at our writing from a different perspective, we see that it is not as solid as we initially thought.

One way to look at your paper differently is to “look” at it with your ears. That is, try reading your answer aloud. Sometimes errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are “heard” better than they are read. Poor transitions between ideas may also “sound” jarring to the ear (“How did I get here from there?”).

Another way to look at your paper differently is to read your answer through the eyes of a reader. Are all of the steps in your logic stated explicitly in your answer, or are you assuming that the reader is filling in information? (You should always tell the reader what you are thinking...they are already reading your paper—don’t give the reader the additional work of reading your mind too.) Are technical terms defined (correctly)? Are examples provided to help the reader understand the textbook-like definition? Analogies and similes are other ways to provide examples using figurative language; sometimes these are beneficial as well. Be careful when using figurative language, however. If the analogy is not a good one, the reader may get lost in trying to understand the analogy instead of using the analogy to improve their understanding of the object being described.

You may also want to try reading your answer from the perspective of someone who disagrees with what you are arguing. Do you provide enough evidence for each point that even a skeptic has to see things your way?