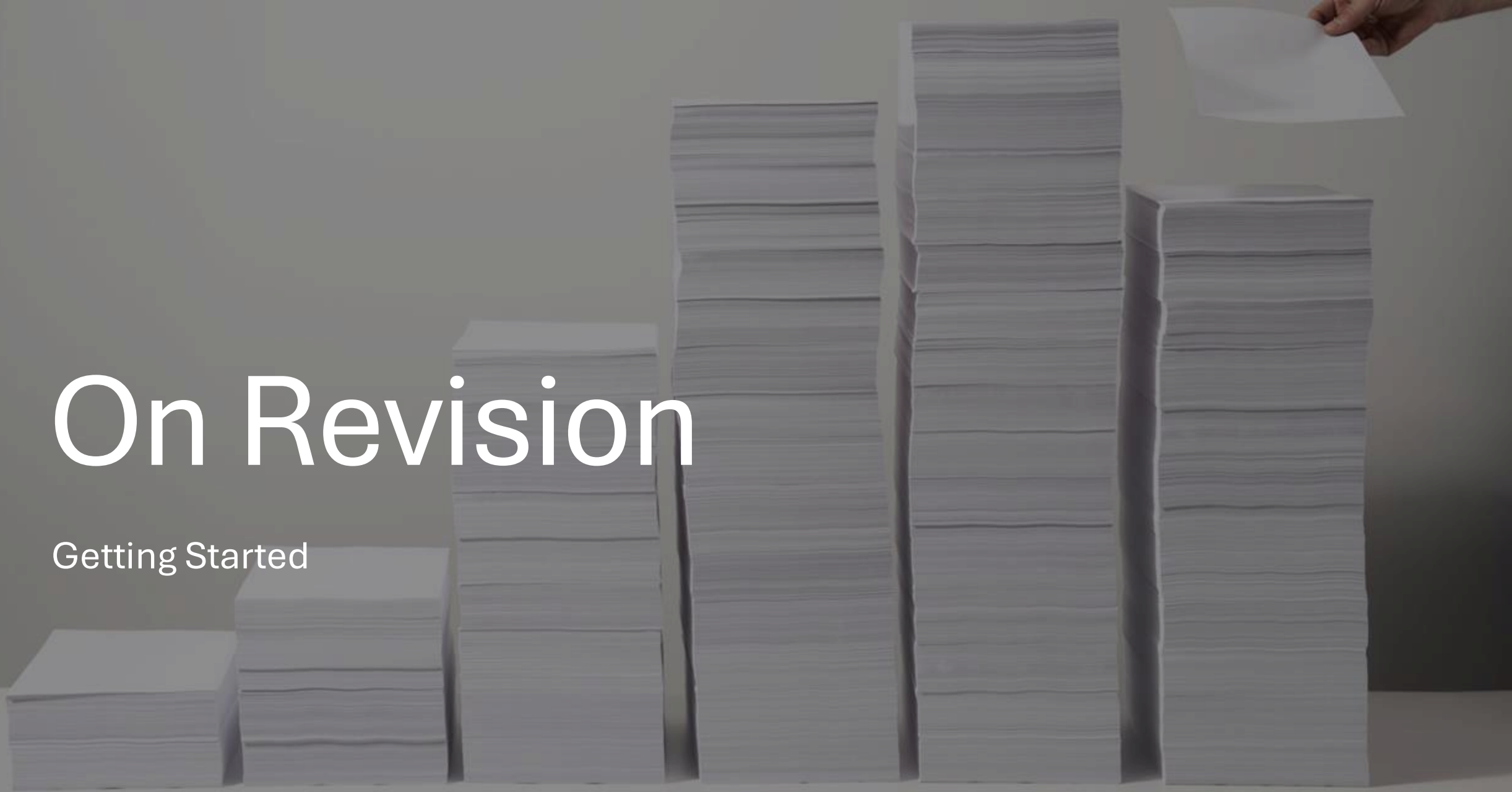


On Revision

Getting Started



Revision

- Can be exciting and rewarding
- Some find this to be the best part of writing – reworking raw material to make it shine.
- Some breathe a sign of relief when the rough draft is done, and they can get onto the revision process.
- With the raw draft done, now they can concentrate on figuring out what the story is really about, and get it to fulfill its promise.

There is no magic bullet for revision.



Every person's revision process is different, like their writing process is different.



Advice for writers from writers p. 543

Perfection is our Enemy

The biggest problem many writers face is that they are seeking perfection. They want what they write to be smooth and polished and meaningful and affecting from the very first word, and unfortunately that is simply not to be.

This desire to excel right from the starting gate can have serious consequences.

- Perfection significantly raises the odds that a writer will freeze and/or go abstract, rather than focusing on the small telling details that will eventually lead to riveting and important material.



The Developmental Stages of a Creative Work

The creative process is not a linear one.

You don't move seamlessly from initial concept, to first draft, to revision, to copy editing, to publishing.

There are all sorts of reversals, returns, retreats.

Sometimes a piece is magically done after just one or two revisions, but more often it takes a lot more than that.

Sometimes it's necessary to tear up the latest draft and return to the original source of the material.



Various Stages of Creative Work

1. Stage 1 -- Initial generating stage: The piece is being messily generated. This stage eventually leads to the first (rough) draft, when a piece with a recognizable beginning, middle, and end has begun to take shape.
2. Keep going!

Stage 2: Creative revision stage (drafts 1-20+)



Although the first draft has been generated, the piece is still usually under "dee " creative construction that often requires complete rewriting of the point, the setting, the scenes, the characters, the plot, etc.



What is happening in this stage is that you (the writer) are gradually working your way from the "triggering" into the "real" subject.

Stage 3: Constructive revisioning stage (drafts 2-20+)

- The piece has solidified, and can now be examined, and critiqued, as a whole piece, rather than as something that is still under primary construction.



Copyediting

The piece is done, and now needs to be examined for wordsmithing, grammar, awkward syntax – anything that detracts from a smooth, polished read.

Syntax – the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-informed sentences.

Fact – One of the worst things you want to do to a piece is to assume it's more complete than it is.

What's critical is that a piece stays "fluid" for as long as necessary to ensure that all the relevant material has been fully explored.

By fluid I mean to keep working on it. Don't settle for something that isn't complete.

"Hot Spots" and other Noteworthy Aspects of an Early Draft



So, what can you do if a piece is not yet at the constructive revisioning stage?



Ask your teacher what he/she thinks is the most interesting part of the essay, or what seem like "hot spots" in the text. Have the reader look for areas of the text that they thought were quickening of interest or have the most potential.



Let someone help you find the heart of the piece. Oftentimes in early revisions we don't know where the heart is.

Exercises for Revision

1. Analytical/Mechanical Exercises – analyze.

- Retype the story or section
- Highlight "to have" and "to be" and replace with more active verbs.
- Highlight all "ing" verbs. Could be a sign of unnecessary words.
- Highlight all abstraction
- Examine all imagery. Is it precise enough?
- Highlight all metaphors and similes. Make sure they add something to the story.
- Read out loud and listen to the rhythm of the language.

- **2. Creative exercises for revision.**

- Change the point of view in the story.
 - Change the tense.
 - Introduce a new character who summarizes what happens.
 - Describe physical aspects of the scene in great detail.
 - If narrative, rewrite as a scene.
 - If it's a scene, rewrite it as a narrative.
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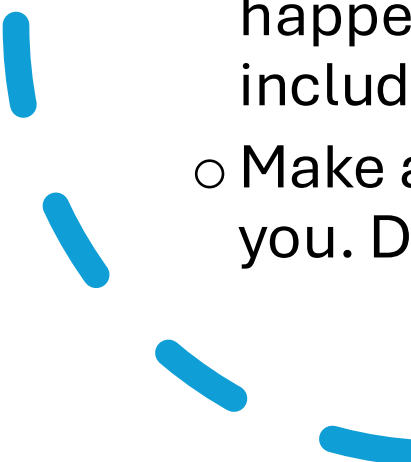


- **3. Research-Based Revision Exercises**

- Find out 10 facts about the place in which your story or nonfiction is set that you didn't know before.
- Interview a person whose profession is being used in the story and find out 10 things you didn't know before.
- Research five recipes that the people in the story could be eating.
- Find out 10 things that were happening in the world at the time the story took place.
- Research the kind of music that would have been playing on the radio at the time the piece is set.



• 4. **Chance-Based Revision Exercises**

- Go to your bookshelf and pick out the third book from the right. Open to the third chapter, write down the first, third, seventh and ninth words in the chapter, and write several paragraphs for your piece based on that combination of words.
 - Take a walk around the block. Make whatever happens (or doesn't happen), or whatever you observe, the basis for a freewrite that you can include in your piece.
 - Make a list of all the things that happened to you this week that surprised you. Do a freewrite on one of them that might be relevant to your piece.
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- **Chance-Based Revision Exercise continued**

- Go out to a cafe or other place where you can hear people talking. Write down a conversation you hear and then do a freewrite based on it.
 - Turn on the radio to a music channel and wait until the fifth song comes on. Do a freewrite based on your associations with the song.
 - Turn to page 6 (or page 10, or whatever) of your local newspaper and do a freewrite based on one of the articles you find there.
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