

Rainbow Review

Overview

This exercise is intended to provide you with a strong visual check that you are organizing your paper in a well-structured way. While not everyone will organize papers in the fashion below, this structure provides a good template for you to consider using in future papers.

To do this review, go through each of the following steps in order. You will need three highlighters of different colors or two different colored highlighters and a pen or pencil.

In class, I want you to try to get into groups of at least 4. However, you can also try this “rainbow review” by yourself at home if you want to double-check how your revisions are going.

Step 1: Thesis, topic sentence, and conclusion (in class, look at your own paper)

- First, using any colored highlighter, such as yellow, highlight your thesis sentence or use a pen or pencil and underline it. Your thesis sentence should state the main position of your paper and should be located at the end of your introduction. The rest of your paper must support your thesis. If you don’t have a clear one sentence thesis, write “Thesis” in the margin of your paper beside your introduction.
- Second, do the same thing for your conclusion using the same color highlighter or by underlining. Your conclusion should consist of a paragraph located at the end of your paper that restates the main point of your paper and addresses how it solves a problem introduced in the introduction. If you don’t have a conclusion stated at the end of your paper, write “Conclusion!” at the end of your paper.
- Third, do the same thing for the topic sentence of each paragraph in your paper using the same color highlighter or by underlining. The topic sentence should be at the start of each paragraph. The rest of the sentences in each paragraph should be directly relevant to that topic sentence. For any paragraph that does not have a clear topic sentence, write “Topic!” in the margins next to that paragraph.
- Finally, read only the sentences you highlighted or underlined so far. Check your organization. Do your thesis sentence, topic sentences, and conclusion together create an organizational outline that reveals the structure of your argument? Does your organization make it clear how the various parts of your argument relate to each other? Is there anything that seems missing? Is there anything that seems unnecessary? This review should help you see the extent that you need to reorganize your paper. If you see anywhere that you think would be better if you work on your paper’s organization, write, “Organization!” in the margin of your paper.

Step 2: Sources (in class, exchange papers with another member of your group)

- First, using a new highlighter of a different color, such as pink, highlight any sentences in which you think there is an instance of paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting of someone else’s idea. If there is no underlining yet, you could do that instead. Remember, paraphrasing is when you read someone else’s work and then

- restate it in your own words. Summarizing is much like paraphrasing, only you are trying to restate only the bare minimum necessary. Summaries are generally much shorter than the original source. If you are not sure if something is borrowed from another source, write “unclear source” in the margin.
- Second, do the same thing (highlight with the same color anywhere else or underline) where you see some fact about the world that is not common knowledge (would a fifth grader know it?)
 - Third, check that there is a proper citation for each highlighted or underlined source or fact. If you see anywhere that you just highlighted that does not have a citation where you think there should be one, write “Cite!” next that location in the margins of the paper. Every borrowed idea and every fact that is not common knowledge should have a citation!
 - Fourth, check that there are sufficient signals within the paper to let the reader know where the paraphrases and summaries begin and end. The reader should be able to tell what author’s ideas are and what ideas are someone else’s. If the reader cannot tell, that is plagiarism! For example, paraphrase could start with a signal like “Benjamin Button writes that” By looking at these sorts of signals and the in-text citations, which are usually at the end of whatever is being paraphrased, summarized, or quoted, the reader should be able to easily tell where the author is presenting someone else’s work. If you see anywhere that you worry a reader might not be able to tell where someone else’s ideas or factual claims are, write “Signals!” in the margin of the paper.
 - Finally, for each quote, ask yourself if the quote is necessary. Is there something about the language of the quote itself that makes it necessary to quote the exact language the original author used? If at all possible, quotes should be shortened to the minimum necessary by using ellipses or just quoting small phrases rather than full sentences. Even better, paraphrase or summarize the original source instead of using quotes. If you see any quote that you think can be shortened, write “Shorten quote!” in the margin of the paper near the quote. If you see any quote that you think should be paraphrased or summarized instead, write “P/S!” in the margin of the paper near the quote.

Step 3: Analysis (in class, exchange papers with another member of your group)

- First, using a new highlighter of a different color, such as orange, highlight any sentences in which you think original thoughts are being presented. If there is no underlining yet, you could do that instead. In these sentences, there may be an analysis of a source, a response to a source, a presentation of the premises of an argument, an explanation the premises of an argument, a discussion of the overall structure of an argument, or otherwise some presentment of original thought. None of the things you highlight here should include ideas or facts borrowed from another source!
- Second, for each source material that was highlighted or underlined in Step 2, check to see that there is an “analysis sandwich.” Before the source material, there should generally be some sentences that also acts to introduce the source material and makes it clear to the reader why they are included it in the paper. These should be the things highlighted or underlined in step 1. After the source material,

there should generally be some original thoughts that tie the source material back to main argument, explain the source material, analyze or critique the source material, or otherwise move the argument forward. The analysis is the bridge that spans the difference between the evidence and the writer's conclusion. These should be the things highlighted earlier in step 3. Anywhere that you see source material (step 2) that is not sandwiched by highlighted or underlined sentences from step 1 and step 3, write "Sandwich!" in the margin of the paper.

- Third, look at any sentences left in the paper that is not highlighted. Ask yourself what purpose those sentences are doing in the paper. If those sentences are not presenting source material or original thoughts, what are they doing? If you are not sure if these sentences should remain in the paper, write "Delete?" near them in the margin of the paper.
- Fourth, take a look at how much analysis is currently highlighted in the paper as a whole. If very few of the sentences are highlighted as analysis, there needs to be more analysis! While the conclusion sentences and the source material sentences are important, the analysis sentences are where you show yourself to be a "thought leader" on your topic. If there is not much analysis, you are being too much of a follower! Make your reader need you. Why should read your writing instead of just going to the other people you are citing? If you look at the paper and most of the sentences are highlighted as step 1 or step 2 material, write "Need More Analysis!" at the end of the paper.
- Fifth, look at the sentences highlighted as analysis and ask yourself if there are any counterarguments that need to be addressed. If there are any counterarguments you think should be addressed that have not been, write "Counterarguments!" in the margin next to whatever point makes you think of an unaddressed counterargument.

Step 4: Levels of Abstraction (in class, exchange papers with another member of your group)

- A successful essay will include sentences that focus on different levels of abstraction.
 - Five ascending levels of abstraction are listed below and rated on a scale from 1 (for least abstract) to 5 (for most abstract):
 - Level 1: Some sentences should just give the raw, concrete, unmediated data from the text.
 - Level 2: Some sentences should describe individual pieces of evidence through a plain or interpretive summary.
 - Level 3: Some sentences should provide broader summaries that draw two or more pieces of evidence together or that provide a broad example.
 - Level 4: Some sentences should orient the reader on a problem to be solved or on pulling abstract concepts together to help solve that problem.
 - Level 5: Some sentences will be general and broadly oriented toward your solution to the problem

- Check to see if throughout the paper, the sentences are hitting all of these levels of abstraction. Students tend to write too much at level 3 without dropping down to level 1 (providing the raw data) or rising up to level 4 and 5 (situating the analysis with broader, universal concepts and concerns).
- Anywhere where you think a particular level of abstraction would be helpful but is not provided, write something in the margin like “need abstraction level 1.”

Step 5: General Revision (in class, return papers to their owners)

- The following list contains some suggestions for ways to edit your paper for grammar, flow, and clarity. If you see anything in your paper that you think you need to revise for grammar, flow, or clarity, circle it in your paper.
 - Use active verbs whenever possible. Try to avoid the use of passive voice.
 - Look for examples of “throat clearing” or excess words. Eliminate them.
 - Check the transitions between your paragraphs. Make sure that your reader, who is unfamiliar with the thoughts in your head, can follow the flow of your discussion from one paragraph to another. Are there any transitions that seem jarring?
 - Make sure that each paragraph has only one topic that is stated in a topic sentence. Every sentence in each paragraph should only be related to the topic of that paragraph. If you have any sentences in a paragraph not directly related to the paragraph topic, put them in a new paragraph. Also, try to avoid long paragraphs. Paragraphs that are 4 to 8 sentences long are generally a good length to shoot for.
 - Check that your citations are in proper MLA form. Do you have a works cited page?
 - Proofread carefully! You might want to try reading your paper out loud slowly to help you identify where your writing is wordy or awkwardly stated. Avoid fragments and make sure you are using commas correctly! Use spell check!