

Drafting and editing - Backchecking

Heading

‘Backchecking’ or ‘reverse outlining’ is a good way to check the main points and progression of ideas in your essay. It is an excellent way to ensure that your overall argument is clear and that you have addressed the essay question. You can do this yourself or swap essays with a friend and peer review.

Process

- 1) Write your essay question in your own words at the top of the page.
e.g. *In this essay I have been asked to define XXX and discuss the impact of YYY on ZZZ.*
- 2) Describe the purpose of each paragraph and say how it builds your argument. Keep it brief (just a sentence if you can) and use appropriate verbs.
e.g.
 “Paragraph 1 describes....”
 “Paragraph 2 develops....”
 “Paragraph 3 defines”
 “Paragraph 4 criticises....”
 “Paragraph 5 evaluates....”
- 3) Once you have completed your outline, answer these questions about each paragraph.
 - i) **Does each paragraph explore only one main idea?**
Revise and restructure any paragraphs that are trying to do too much at once
 - ii) **Were there any paragraphs you couldn’t easily write a sentence about?**
The purpose and the meaning should be clear. Rewrite or reject if needed.
 - iii) **Is each paragraph logically connected to the ones before and after?**
Are the connections made clear with signal phrases?
 - iv) **Are there any paragraphs that do not build your argument?**
Do parts of any paragraphs go off on a tangent?
Revise, rewrite or restructure if needed
 - v) **Compare each paragraph to the sentence you have written about it.**
Are you sure every paragraph is doing its job?

Now, you can begin to edit your essay

Other resources

- Editing and proofreading assignments