

Revision Checklists

A checklist is a collection of tasks that students consult as they re-think their rough drafts into second drafts. As a task is completed, the student checks the item off the list. I asked my students to turn in their checked-off checklists with both their drafts so that I could monitor what changes and discoveries they had made to their writing.

I discovered that checklists inspired revision more when they changed form often. Using the exact same checklist with every assignment eventually meant that some students stopped reading the checklists as carefully as I would have liked them to. My suggestion is this: design six or seven different checklists to use throughout a year; never let two checklists be the same, even if the only difference is that the tasks are listed in a different order. The PBL Checklist website actually lets you create a unique checklist for each writing assignment in very little time:

<http://www.4teachers.org/projectbased/checklist.shtml>. It's worth your time to design multiple checklists, and on-line tools can certainly make that task easier.

Another way to keep the "same old revision checklist" different with your students is to use the entire checklist I am providing here with every writing assignment, but with each new assignment, have students highlight different checklist tasks from the master list in yellow. Only highlighted items will be expected in the next draft, and often negotiating what to highlight as a whole class leads to marvelous discoveries about what your students actually know about good writing.

And finally...Don't be afraid to let your students design the checklist for you after they've gotten used to what a checklist is. They're easy to create, and they're easy to Xerox for your whole class. If your writing assignment's expectations are clear to your students, they will most likely design an excellent checklist in student-friendly language for each other.

Put check here:	Your Revision Checklist: Idea Development	
	My writing stays on topic throughout the paper.	Idea Development
	I use quality details in my writing over quantity of details.	
	My written ideas all relate to each other.	
	I use quality character details to describe both physical and personality traits.	
	I use quality setting details to paint a picture of place in the reader's mind.	
	My writing makes complete sense.	
	I use figurative language (simile and metaphor) to enhance my writing.	
	I show with writing, instead of tell.	
	My written ideas are unique.	
	I have no stray ideas out of place in my writing.	

Put check here:	Your Revision Checklist: Organization	
	My introduction grabs the reader's attention.	Organization
	My conclusion is satisfying.	
	My conclusion refers back to my introduction.	
	My paragraphs are thoughtful and intentional.	
	Each paragraph has a topic sentence.	
	I use transition words as I move from idea to idea.	
	My pacing is constant.	
	The order of my ideas is intentional.	
	My title is thoughtful.	

Put check here:	Your Revision Checklist: Voice, SF and WC	
	I write in a way that will satisfy my intended audience.	Voice, Sentence Fluency and Word Choice
	I can point out places where my writing sounds like me.	
	When read aloud, my writing sounds conversational.	
	I have places in my writing where you can hear the conviction.	
	My personality shines through in my writing.	
	I vary my sentence lengths.	
	I vary my sentence beginnings.	
	I use a variety of transition words.	
	Each sentence tries to build on the previous sentence.	
	Each sentence has a clear meaning.	
	My sentences flow from one to another.	
	I use strong verbs that sound like me.	
	I use precise nouns that sound like me.	
	I use interesting adjectives that sound like me.	
	Every word sounds “just right.”	

Put check here:	Your Revision Checklist: Conventions	
	I have double-checked my spelling of harder words in my draft.	Conventions
	I have double-checked my spelling of names in my draft.	
	I have scrutinized my paper for comma splices.	
	I have scrutinized my paper for run-on sentences.	
	Sentence fragments are intentional.	
	Homonym check: <i>there, they're, and their.</i>	
	Homonym check: <i>your and you're.</i>	
	Homonym check: <i>to, too, and two.</i>	
	Dialogue has been checked carefully for correct punctuation.	