

Revision Strategies

Global Strategies for Revision: Global Strategies refers to revision strategies that require a thorough re-thinking and re-conceptualization of a piece of writing. For our purposes, these strategies could work on the level of the paragraph and the whole paper.

Example: Provocative or Radical Revision (cf. Fulwiler, Toby. "Provocative Revision." *The Writing Center Journal*. 12 (2): 1992 and Bishop, Wendy. Elements of Alternate Style: Essays on Writing and Revision. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1997. Esp. pages 170-4.)

- Limiting

 - Time, place, and action

 - Scope and Focus

- Adding

 - Dialogue

 - Interview

 - Pictures or Graphics

 - Quotation

- Switching/Shifting

 - Point of View

 - Voice

 - Tense/Time

- Transforming

 - Genre (e.g. nonfiction to poem to advertisement, fables, letters, recipe, sermon, game)

 - Metaphor Driving the Main Idea

 - Typography/Layout

 - Multimedia

SUGGESTIONS FOR SHORT FORMAL WRITING TO GO WITH FULWILER'S "PROVOCATIVE REVISION" ARTICLE

The following suggestions are meant to help students develop a piece of formal writing by provoking them to do certain revision activities. Students would type these out of class, one to three pages (250-750 words) long. Teachers would collect and duplicate copies (or put on overhead, or distribute via e-mail) of these to share with the class as the student's progress from draft to draft. This is designed as a first paper for students, to introduce them to revision as an active part of writing. Using the ideas above, you could create multiple revisions that really challenge your students. You also don't have to stick to the narrative structure of this paper. You can use it for argument, critical analysis, research, and so forth. I would be interested to see how far from the original conception we might be able to travel without losing the usefulness of the provocative concept.

ASSIGNMENT 1

We want you to begin a paper in which you tell us a story of something important that happened to you in the last few years. Plan to start this paper today, but don't expect to finish it soon. In this class, we will write and rewrite, play and experiment with our drafts until we find the best voice and form in which to tell our story. It will help you if you will go through some structured exercises on the way to completing this paper. Here is the first one:

- To begin your paper make a list of ten possible events, incidents, or occasions during the past year that seem in some way important to you. (Think about things that taught you something, that gave you an insight, that changed you in some way, small or large.)

ASSIGNMENT 2

Select three topics from your list and write a good full paragraph about each. See if each paragraph can meet these conditions:

- They will teach your readers about both you and the event
- They are not about someone or something so close to you that you couldn't be objective about it.
- The experience happened recently enough to remember well.
- It happened long enough ago that you have some distance from it.
- It has not been fully explained or figured out by you, so that exploring it through writing would be useful for you.

ASSIGNMENT 3

Read your three paragraphs to a small group of your classmates. Ask them which ones they would especially like to hear more about. Ask yourself which one you would most like to write more about.

If you and your readers agree on which paragraph you're most interested in, start writing and see if you can create 2-3 pages of writing on this topic.

If your readers want to hear one thing and you would like to explore another, you have a choice to make. Try writing a page or so on each one and see which feels better to

you. Maybe share these with your readers again and see what they think; or go with your instinct and continue the one that feels best for you.

ASSIGNMENT 4

Write another draft of this paper in which you do the following:

- Start the paper using dialogue. Remember as best you can some actual words somebody (you?) said to somebody else (you?). Use these as a way into your story this time.
- Avoid using words that tell the reader how they should feel about something. For example, instead of describing a car as beautiful (which is your judgment) describe what the car actually looked like.
- Include as much descriptive detail as you can using only “sense words” or “images” (words appealing to sight, sound, touch, taste, smell: Instead of calling the car “beautiful,” try to describe it so we see the beauty. It’s not easy but it’s worth it.

EX. The red car was long and low, with chrome that mirrored a black canvas top. Inside the brown leather felt soft and smelled new.

ASSIGNMENT 5

Expand your draft to five pages by observing the following conditions:

- Limit the time in which your story takes place to several hours, or at most, one day.
- Limit the setting to a single place. Describe it with sense words, withhold judgment as much as possible.
- Limit the action portrayed to a single event or occurrence. Remember to keep the dialogue in and maybe add more.

ASSIGNMENT 6

Write your story in a new way by trying one (or both) of the following ideas:

- Tell your story from someone else’s point of view. Refer to your self as “he” or “she.” In other words, see yourself as someone else would—your mom, your boss, a customer, a friend, a cat.
- Find a new format to tell your story in. If you’ve been writing an essay, try recasting your story as a dialogue, drama, letter exchange, series of journal entries, a film or TV script.

ASSIGNMENT 7

Spread out all of your drafts (at least five) you have done so far in front of you. See if you can invent a way to arrive at a final paper by creating a synthesis of your best writing so far. Using your computer, move files, cut and paste parts of one with another. But here again, don’t be afraid to start a new version if you don’t like what you’ve done so far. We don’t recommend this last option, but remember, it’s never too late to start fresh; and what you’ve done so far will make your fresh start better anyway.