

Revising the content

Ask yourself:

- Do my words and sentences develop my arguments in the direction I want them to go, or have I been pushed in a direction simply because I've chosen the wrong phrase?
- Do they convey my ideas succinctly and clearly?
- Are there different words that would convey my ideas more accurately?

Work through the following simple steps to revise the content of your review.

Revising the content – checklist

1 Spelling

- *Have I identified all the homonyms? Those that appear most often include:*
 - *their and there*
 - *you're and your*
 - *two, too and to*
 - *find and fined*
 - *passed and past*
 - *dessert and desert*
 - *weather and whether*
 - *site, sight and cite*
 - *compliment and complement*
 - *stationery and stationary*
- *Have I corrected all the confusions over whether to use 'c' or 's' in some words?*
- *Have I found all the typos, the missing words and the inconsistencies in spelling dates, names and figures?*

2 Grammar

- *Have I checked that I have consistently used tenses?*
- *Have I used the right verb forms consistently for plural and singular?*
- *Have I checked my punctuation?*

3 Words and sentences

- *Have I cut up all long sentences into shorter ones?*
- *Have I replaced long, obscure words with short and simple ones?*

4 De-cluttering

- *Have I de-cluttered paragraphs by removing all unnecessary words and sentences?*
- *Have I removed all unnecessary modifiers in favour of strong nouns and verbs?*
- *Have I written in the active voice?*
- *Have I only used the passive voice when what is done or the receiver of the action is more important than the doer?*

5 Reading it aloud

- *Does it have an easy flow and rhythm that will hold the reader's*

attention?

- Are there any clumsy sentences and passages where the logic breaks down?
- Would it be better to use short sentences to get across a key point more effectively?

6 Word limit

If there is a limit and you've exceeded it, look at the following:

- **Repetition** – there may be sections that say the same things, but in different ways. Can you safely cross-reference them, rather than describe the same points again?
- **Less relevant sections** – as you have written your review your ideas will have taken much clearer shape. As a result, you might now see that certain sections are no longer quite so relevant.
- **Unnecessary material** – as you look to economise on words you may realise that you've described material, which, instead, you could have presented in a table and drawn your inferences from there.
- **Long quotations** – in a previous chapter we discussed the tendency for readers to infer from long quotations that the writer hasn't processed the ideas sufficiently and is merely hiding behind the words of the author. To avoid this and to save words, think about editing them. They will probably still do the job you want them to do.

For more information, see *How to Write Your Literature Review*, Chapter 28.