

Revise a Paragraph for Clarity and Coherence

L08 · v0.1.4 · Learner copy

In this estimated 40-minute lesson, learners revise original sample paragraphs so readers can follow the ideas. They clarify vague references, connect and order related ideas, and preserve the draft's intended meaning unless a task explicitly asks for a content change.

Revise for a clear path through ideas

Revision helps a reader follow what a paragraph means. First identify the draft's main point and the facts it includes. Keep those facts and that meaning unless a task asks you to change content. If a word such as "it" names a person or thing from an earlier sentence and the reference is vague, name that person or thing. Some sentences begin with "it" without using it to name a thing, as in "It was hard to find the shelf." You can recast such a sentence when it helps the reader; for example, "The shelf was hard to find." A sentence beginning with "It was hard/easy..." may also use "it" for an earlier thing, so read the whole sentence and its context. Put related ideas together and arrange them in an order that makes sense. Add a transition only when it shows a real connection. Remove repeated wording without cutting information a reader needs. Reread the whole paragraph: can you tell what each sentence refers to, how the ideas connect, and whether the revision still says what the draft meant? More than one revision can meet these goals.

Model draft: The Garden Map

Original fictional instructional draft.

The garden club made a map of the garden paths and added new symbols. They put it by the door. It was hard for visitors to follow because it had no key. The club made a key on a card. It went next to it. This helped visitors match symbols to paths.

Modeled revision

Read the draft. In “They put it by the door,” “It was hard for visitors to follow,” and “because it had no key,” “it” refers to the map. In “It went next to it,” the first word means the key card and the second means the map. Study the possible revision and its notes. Which changes make the meaning easier to follow? Which details and main idea stay the same? This is one possible version, not a sentence pattern to copy.

Possible revision: The garden club made a map of the garden paths and added new symbols. The club placed the map by the door. At first, visitors had trouble following the map because it had no key. The club wrote a key on a card and placed the card beside the map. With the key nearby, visitors could match each symbol to a path.

[Clarify] “The club,” “the map,” and “the card” name the people and things. “Visitors had trouble following the map” names the map directly instead of referring to it with “It.” [Sequence] The revision puts the map in place before explaining the missing key and the added card. [Connect] “At first” and “With the key nearby” show the time and cause-and-result relationships. [Preserve meaning] The revision keeps the same map, symbols, location, key card, and visitor action; it does not add a new event.

Guided draft: The Library Sign

Original fictional instructional draft.

The art club made a sign for the new-books shelf and tested it outside the library. It was hard to find the new-books shelf. The sign had a blue arrow. The students turned it toward the shelf and wrote “New Books” under it. It was easier to find.

Guided revision

With a partner or on your own, revise “The Library Sign” so a reader can follow what the words name and how the changes connect. Some “it” words name an earlier thing, such as the sign in “tested it.” In “It was hard to find the new-books shelf,” opening “It” does not stand for the shelf; the shelf is named later in the sentence. In “It was easier to find,” “It” refers to the shelf under this task’s stated meaning. You can recast both sentences to name the shelf clearly. Keep the same information: the sign was outside the library, students turned its blue arrow toward the new-books shelf, they wrote “New Books” under the arrow, and the draft says the shelf was easier to find after those changes. You may combine, reorder, or recast sentences. Mark one confusing spot in the draft. Use the lines below to revise it, then check that you kept the same information. Do not add a new reason or result.

Guided revision

Independent draft: The Club Page

Original fictional instructional draft.

The newsletter has a page about clubs. It comes first. Readers looked for meeting days. They were in the middle. Some readers missed it. The class moved them to the top. It was easier to find them. The page still had club descriptions.

Independent revision

Independently revise “The Club Page” into a paragraph a reader can follow. When “it,” “they,” or “them” names a person or thing, make its referent clear. Also recast “It was easier to find them” so the sentence names what was easier to find. Keep the same meaning: the newsletter begins with a club page; meeting days were in the middle and some readers missed them; the class moved the meeting days to the top; the draft says the meeting days were easier to find after the move; the page still included club descriptions. You may change sentence order and wording, and you may combine or split sentences. Do not add new reasons, events, or results. After revising, underline one change that improved clarity or coherence and briefly name what it helps a reader understand.

Revision check

Use this check while revising the independent draft. The task gives the intended meaning. Keep it in view, then reread your whole paragraph.

What meaning and information must stay?

Which reference or connection may confuse a reader?

Revised paragraph

One change I made and what it helps a reader understand

Original learner-facing strategy and directions for revising for clarity and coherence.

Original fictional sample draft “The Garden Map.”

Original fictional sample draft “The Library Sign.”

Original fictional sample draft “The Club Page.”