How to Edit a Paper

Ned Dimitrov

February 3, 2016

The purpose of this document is to describe some easy steps to help you edit your own writing. Execute these steps after you have completed your first draft. This document focuses only on editing, but, as a reminder, you should always create your first draft from an outline.

The editing process has three steps. You can think of the steps as starting with global edits, and ending with local edits. The steps deal with 1) Paper structure and content 2) Paragraph structure and content 3) Sentence structure and content.

• **Step 1: The Flow of Ideas**

  1. For each paragraph, next to the paragraph, write down the main point it is trying to communicate to the reader. At the end, the document should look something like:

  2. Do the main points belong together or should they be reordered?

  3. Do the points create a solid argument? What is the weakest point of the argument?

  4. Reorder the points as needed.

  5. Add topic paragraphs for each section. Why is the section there? What should the reader get out of it?

  6. What are the main contributions? What is the take-away for the reader? Insights?
• Step 2: Flow in a Paragraph

  1. The topic sentence of each paragraph should be its point.

  2. All sentences in the paragraph should have to do with that point only.

  3. Remove vague sentences.

  4. Add more clarity.

• Step 3: Sentence Content

  1. Delete words/phrases that don’t communicate (are not necessary).

  2. Make sentences shorter if you can.