Guidelines for Revision
Preliminary: Review Your Materials
—Re-read your essay and your passage. You want to avoid the generalizations that may have crept into the first draft, to select what you really need for the second, and to uncover passages and ideas you may not have considered before.

1. **Getting Started**
—Make sure you understand all comments on the essay. See me if they're illegible or puzzling.
—Look up grammatical, usage, and stylistic errors in the style manual.
—Decide what areas you want to concentrate on in your revision; you may not be able to cover every possible issue.
—Go back over your Annotation Studio annotations and add new ones or develop what you had.

2. **What's the Big Idea?**
—Reconsider your thesis and argument. Even if they were clear and effective in the original, see what you can do to improve.
—Try to narrow and focus your thesis. Apply the "so what?" test. Ask yourself if anyone would argue *against* this thesis; if not, find a way to take a more controversial or specific position.
— Ask yourself if your thesis is an *observation* or an *argument*, and try to avoid committing yourself to an observation that other alert readers would be able to make for themselves.
—Check your evidence. Have you derived your argument from a close reading of language and details in the text or have you relied on generalizations? Avoid summary and plot narration.
—Look at the introduction and conclusion. Make sure the introduction sets up the argument, showing the significance of your point. Try to make your conclusion provocative and interesting. More than summarizing your argument, it should show its implications in a larger context. Try to keep the reader thinking after the paper is over.

3. **How Do You Get There?**
— Pay attention to topic sentences and paragraph organization. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence that advances the argument. Give this sentence emphasis in the paragraph and subordinate your supporting statements, evidence, explanation, etc.
— Use transitions from point to point within the paragraph and make sure the paragraph completes the thought before going on.
— Use transitions also from paragraph to paragraph, making it clear how you get from one point to the next.
— Avoid summarizing or describing material that you can assume your reader knows, and try to avoid topic sentences that seem to point more to the work in question ("in the next paragraph the author uses this image," or "then the character leaves town") than to your ideas ("although the image seems earthly in the first sentence, by the second the author is giving it a new, more religious meaning," or "nowhere is the author's use of flight imagery more evident than when the character leaves town").
— Break up long, rambling paragraphs into more manageable units; alternatively consider combining or expanding short, choppy paragraphs.

4. **Details, Details**
—Edit your essay. Fix the grammatical and spelling errors and obvious blemishes of style.

—Work on verbs (reduce passive verbs and overuse of the verb "to be"), eliminate wordiness and repetition, and vary and enrich your diction (unless it needs simplifying).
—Check citations for correct format, and make sure every cited work appears on the Works Cited, likewise that every work on the WC list is actually cited in the essay.
—Most of all, remember and remind your reader that there's a real person with a distinctive voice behind all this prose. See if you can make that voice be heard!

5. **Think Again**
All of the above is pretty much meaningless if you don't feel connected to the material or don't have something to say. If you're not sure what you really meant or don't know why it's important, think about it harder, talk to a friend about the material (often a good way to develop your ideas), or see us for further brainstorming.

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