

Revision: Paragraph Cut Up (Organization)

Sometimes, you can find the best way to organize your paper by cutting it up and organizing it in different ways.

1. Print your paper (You can use scrap paper, and you can single space the essay in order to save paper – just be sure to cross out the backside/scrap-side of each page).
2. If there are any paragraphs that go from the bottom of one page to the top of the next, use a numbering, lettering, or symbol system so you can keep these together, or use tape or a stapler to join them.
3. Using scissors, cut your header and title away from the front page, and cut off all page numbers.
4. Cut your essay so that each paragraph is by itself on separate pieces of paper.
5. Cut away any excess white space from the end of the last paragraph. Now there should be no way to tell whether a paragraph is part of the introduction, the body, or the conclusion.
6. Shuffle the paragraphs.

Analysis:

1. Read the first paragraph and answer the following:
 - a. Does this paragraph have a clear topic sentence? If so, highlight it. If not, write a sentence or phrase that best describes what the paragraph is about in the margin. When you revise your electronic draft, you will need to add in clear topic sentences.
 - b. How many points does the paragraph cover? A good paragraph covers one point in depth. If your paragraph is covering more than one point, take scissors and cut the paragraph so that each point is on a separate slip of paper. When you revise your electronic draft, you will need to separate these points as well, making each one its own paragraph.
 - c. After doing letter b, you may discover that your paragraph no longer has any illustration, description, source, or other form of support. Write “lacks support” on the slip of paper. When you revise your electronic draft, you will need to build support for this point, expanding it and developing it more fully.
2. Repeat the above three steps for each paragraph in the pile, noting topic sentences, separating points, and noting places to develop support as you find them.
3. When you have analyzed the stack, spread them out on the floor, table, or desk, and prioritize them in the order you feel they should be discussed. Here are some helpful hints about the way people think:
 - a. Before comparing, contrasting, or classifying, it's a good idea to provide a definition or illustration so that readers know what you're talking about.
 - b. Causes usually come before effects (though not always); problems usually come before solutions (though again, there are exceptions).
4. When you have finished ordering your paragraphs, number them in the new order; you are now ready to cut and paste your electronic draft, using your numbered paragraphs as a guide. Be sure to follow the instructions for electronic copy revision in Analysis #1a, #1b, and #1c!