# Essay Ratiocination A revising and editing strategy . . .

**Highlight in BLUE all the "to be" verbs in your essay.**

Is,   Am,   Are,   Was,   Were,   Be,      Being,   Been
Had Have  Has    Could  Should  Would  Can      Will
(And all <u>contractions</u> using "to be" verbs, such as "isn't" and "aren't" – unless in dialogue -- but you shouldn't use contractions in your essay) Ignore "to be" verbs that appear in quotes.

These are weak verbs.  As often as possible, use action verbs to make your writing more alive.
How many weak verbs do you have?  Write that number at the top of your paper.
For final essay, rewrite to remove half.
Write a strong very above the "to be verb" you are replacing
As you complete this, change any past tense verbs to LPT, *literary present tense*.

**Bracket every sentence beginning.  (2-3 words)**
If you consistently begin sentences in similar way, change it up!
Change at least seven sentences.
You can start the sentence with a prepositional or an introductory phrase.

**Highlight in PINK <u>this</u> at the <u>beginning of any sentences</u>.**
"This" at the beginning of a sentence should be followed directly by a NOUN!  ("This" what?  "This scene…?"  "This image…?"  You may know what you are referencing, but your reader may not.

~~**CROSS OUT**~~ **all 2ⁿᵈ person pronouns**
Get rid of "you" and "your" (unless in dialogue)
You may not use second person in any academic essay.

**Highlight in GREEN every "<u>they</u>," "<u>them</u>," or "<u>their</u>" AND the noun that is the antecedent.**
Even though some of the following indefinite pronouns may seem to have plural meanings, treat them as singular in formal English:  Anybody, anyone, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, no one, somebody, something—ALL TAKE SINGULAR PRONOUNS (she, he, etc.)

Make a comment on the pronouns that need to be changed.
**Example:**  In this class, everyone performs at <u>her</u> (not their) own ability.
When <u>someone</u> has been drinking, <u>he</u> is more likely to speed.
<u>Neither</u> of my daughters remembered to bring <u>her</u> lunch this morning.
<u>Everyone</u> has <u>her</u> own beliefs.

**Highlight in ORANGE all possessives.**  (Look for words ending in "s"—are they plural or possessive?) Check for proper apostrophe use.
The girl's backpack
All the girls' backpacks
The children's backpacks
John's backpack
Chris's backpack
The killers' perspectives
The Clutters' lives
Dewey's investigation

**Check for repeated <u>key</u> words**
Repetition can be impactful when purposeful.  It loses its impact if overused.
Make sure you are <u>varying word choice </u>when you can.
BUT – Do NOT get thesaurus happy:
As water flows over the rocks, the songs rise in volume and show the magic in the air.
As aquatic liquid courses upon the earth, the aria magnifies in sonority and reveals the enchantment in the zephyr.
**Or a favorite example:**
When my feline, I waxed lachrymose.
I felt sad when my cat died.

**~~CROSS OUT~~ the words "very" and "really"**
It really sounds like you are really trying very hard to really reach your page count very much.
**Get rid of them.**

**Highlight in YELLOW imprecise of vague ("dead") words.**
Find the best word for the job.
Avoid general, vague, overused words such as:  great, good, thing, important, nice, bad, sad, etc.

**Usage Rule #1 hanged, hung**
<u>Hanged</u> is the past-tense and past-participle form of the verb **<u>hang</u>**, meaning "to execute".  For example: *The prisoner was hanged at dawn.*
<u>Hung</u> is the past-tense and past-participle of the verb **<u>hang</u>**, meaning "to fasten or suspend."  For example: *The stockings were hung by the chimney with care.*
**Remember**:  Laundry gets hung, but people get hanged.
Check that you have used **<u>hang </u>**or **<u>hung</u>** correctly.

**Usage Rule #2 amount, number**
Use **amount** with quantities that **cannot be counted**.  For example: *The police found a small amount of blood on the boots.*
Use **<u>number</u>** with quantities that **<u>can be counted</u>**.  For example:  *A large number of citizens attended the killers' trial.*
**Remember:**  Don't use amount to refer to people!
Check that you have used **number** or **amount** correctly.

Usage Rule #3 who, that
Use **<u>who</u>** (not that or which) to refer to **<u>persons</u>**.  For example:  *Perry was the murderer who* (**not** *that* **or** *which*) *actually killed the Clutters.*
Generally, use **<u>that</u>** to refer to **<u>things</u>** or, occasionally, to a **<u>group or class of people</u>**.  For example: *The jury that convicted the killers acted swiftly.*
Remember:  Use who to refer to people!  Check that you have used **<u>who</u>** or **<u>that</u>** correctly.

**Other Usage Reminders:**
Check the following:
Use**d** to (not "use to")
Could **have**/would **have** (not "could of"/"would of")
**Loose** is an adjective meaning "not securely fastened."  **Lose** is a verb meaning "to misplace" or "to not win."  For example:  Did you lose your only loose pair of work pants?