



Be A Reader, Not A Writer

How It Works

Introduce a brief visualization exercise before students begin working on the page: ask them to picture approaching this text for the first time; imagine that they are picking up a magazine or clicking on a website to read this essay because they want to understand the topic more deeply.

What are their expectations? What do they hope to learn?

After a brief visualization, they should read the piece with pen in hand and mark anything that doesn't feel entirely logical or fully developed.

Why It Works

Revision requires reading one's own text as a reader, not a writer, so moving away from the familiar screen and envisioning oneself as a reader can replicate readership by creating the distance writers need to meaningfully revise. If students feel themselves moving back to the "writer" position, they should pause and revisualize themselves as outside readers with no personal connection to the text.

Switching Back to Writer

Students recognize themselves in this description:

You read a sentence on the page and think, "What on earth does that mean?" So you read it again and find more clarity: "Oh, okay, I think I see what I was trying to say." Then you read it a third time and say to yourself, "Yes, I see it now. Great, that feels clear."

Nothing on the page has changed, so why did an incomprehensible sentence begin to make sense? The student switched from reader to writer. As the writer, she remembers what she intended to say, but as a reader, she was confused.

Therefore, when using this technique, it's important to mark – and change! – every sentence that feels wrong on an initial reading. If rereading clarifies the meaning, the student has identified that only the writer understands it.

Remind students to trust themselves when they are in the reader mindset; when they do, an outside reader will follow the work as well as the writer does.