Re-Writing/Revision

Pedagogy

For many students, revision is a very easy process. They fix up the grammar, add a word or two, and they're DONE. It often takes time to convince students that revision literally means to "re-see," that a revision is not just a grammatical clean-up but an opportunity to change the writing significantly. Few students want to consider the possibility that their paper might need major changes or even—a dreadful thought!—to be re-written entirely. Often, as Annie Dillard suggests, you need to . . .

> *. . . demolish the work and start over. You can save some of the sentences, like bricks. It will be a miracle if you can save some of the paragraphs, no matter how excellent in themselves or hard-won. You can waste a year worrying about it, or you can get it over with now.* (The Writing Life)

It may or may not comfort a student to learn that most professional writers often create a dozen or more drafts before they are finished and that even this final product may be "pale fire" compared to the work they'd originally envisioned.

Technology and Revision

Without a computer, revision is hard and painful. With a computer, revision is hard and painful but a little bit easier. Many of the techniques used in pre-writing and drafting (such as brainstorming, outlining, comparing documents, tracking changes, etc.) will also be used for revising. In addition, Word provides a number of tools specifically designed for revising and editing a document.

1. Cut and Paste/Copy and Paste

Cut and paste makes moving text around relatively painless. The cut and paste and copy and paste techniques are explained in detail in the first section (on Pre-Writing). Remember, however, that if you lose a large chunk of text or perform some other lovely glitch, click on the **Undo** button rather than panicking. You can undo all your changes up until the last save and you can redo several changes as well.

Undo and Redo buttons

2. Spelling and Grammar Check

There are two rules for using Word's (or any other word processing program's) spell and grammar check:

1. *Always* use them.
2. *Never* trust them.

Spell check is only as good as the user. If you don't know what spelling of a word to choose, spell check is pretty useless (as the following poem dramatizes):
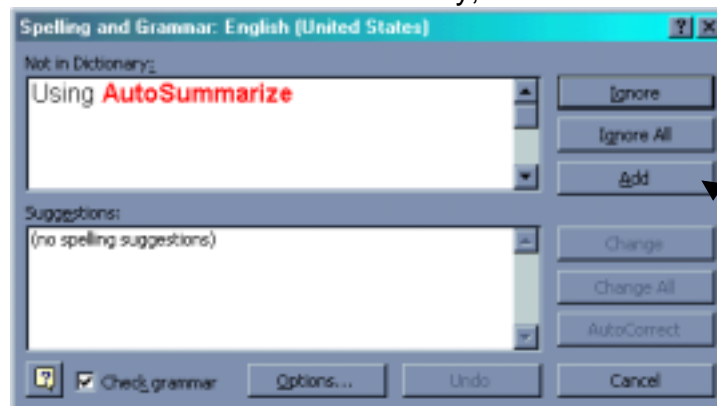
I have a spelling checker.
It cam with my PC;
It plainly marks four my revue
Mistakes I can not sea.
I've run this poem threw it,
I'm sure your please too no,
Its letter perfect in it's weigh,
My checker tolled me sew.

Nevertheless the spell check should *always* be used. No matter how many times a writer proofreads his or her document, misspelled (and often miss-typed) words can remain undetected. To spell check a document select **Tools, Spelling and Grammar** or click on the spell check toolbutton:

Customizing Spell Check's Dictionary

If there are words you use commonly such as a medical word like *arrhythmia* that are not in Word's dictionary, first make sure the word is spelled correctly and then **add** it to the dictionary so that it will only be underlined when you type it incorrectly.

Click on the Add button to enter a word into Word's dictionary.

Drs, Kristi Siegel, Gene Baer, and Martin Moldenhauer   *10/15/99*

Grammar Check

Grammar check requires even more knowledge on the part of its user. Although grammar check often will be right, it may suggest corrections such as a capital letter (when the program thinks you are at the beginning of a line) that are incorrect. Nevertheless, grammar check should be used every time you finish a document; it will often "catch" mistakes you have missed.

Customizing Grammar Check

By default grammar check is set for standard usage. If, however, you are creating technical documents or other papers that require a different level of usage, change the **writing style** level to one that fits your writing. To change the default, select **Tools, Spelling and Grammar** and then click on the **Options** button in the dialog box that appears.
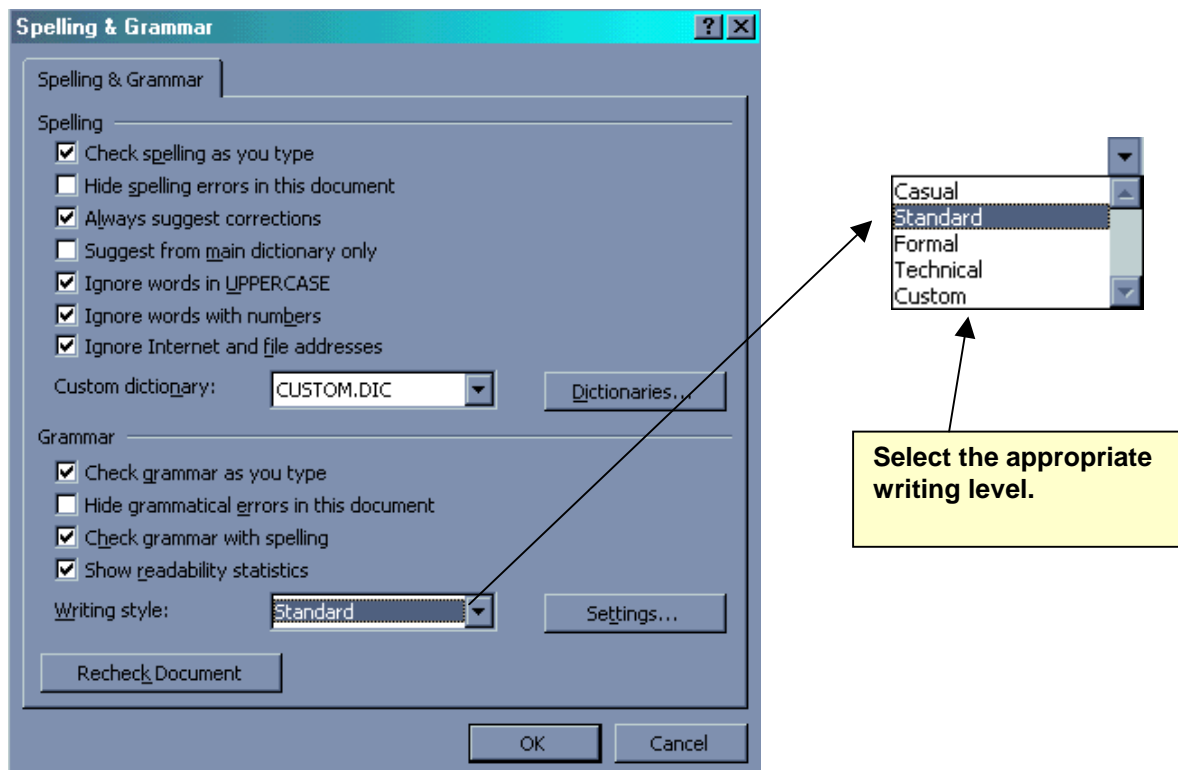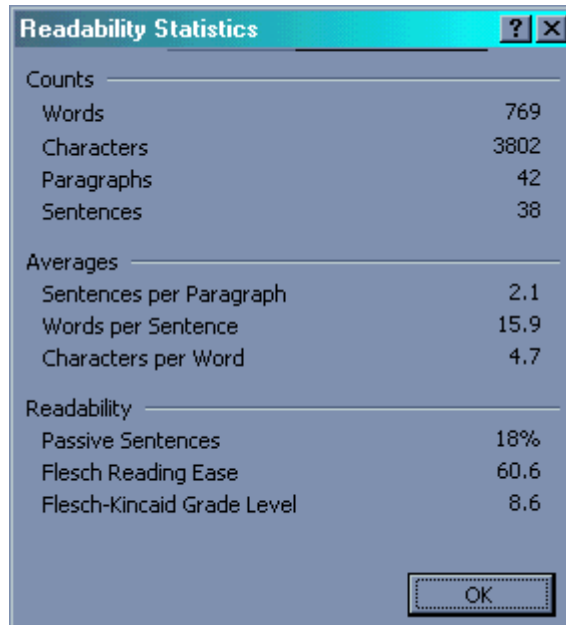

Spelling and Grammar Options

Readability Statistics

In the spelling and grammar options' box pictured above notice also the option to "Show readability statistics." By default, this option is not selected. If it is checked, you will get a readability and statistical breakdown on your

document when you have completed the spelling and grammar check. This breakdown offers information that may be very valuable to your students. For example, if a student tends to write short, choppy sentences (or long, wordy sentences) he/she can see the average number of words per sentence in his/her document. Similarly, a student who uses too many passive constructions can check the percentage of passive sentences in the document.
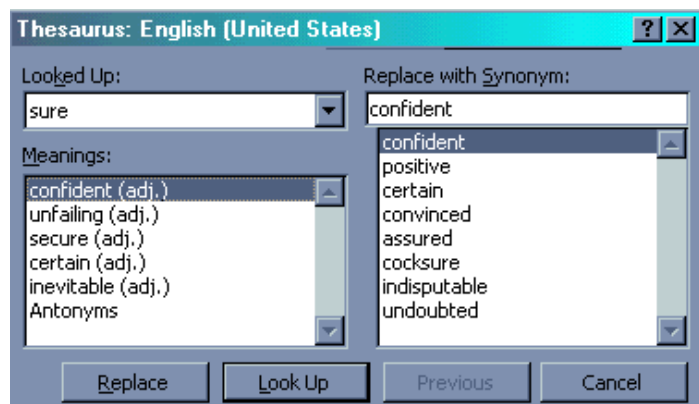
Readability Statistics

Counts	
Words	769
Characters	3802
Paragraphs	42
Sentences	38

Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	2.1
Words per Sentence	15.9
Characters per Word	4.7

Readability	
Passive Sentences	18%
Flesch Reading Ease	60.6
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	8.6

OK

The readability statistics on this document

3. The Thesaurus

The thesaurus also needs to be used with discretion or you might wind up creating a sentence like this:

In order to eschew the diurnal visitation of a physician, it is imperative to ingest the fruit of the tree *Pyrus malus.* [*An apple a day keeps the doctor away.*]

Nevertheless, the thesaurus can help cut down on word repetition and often can provide the right word rather than the *almost* right word. The thesaurus also provides a look-up function and specifies whether a word is a noun, verb, adjective, etc. Point out to students that if

Thesaurus: English (United States)

Looked Up:
sure

Meanings:
confident (adj.)
unfailing (adj.)
secure (adj.)
certain (adj.)
inevitable (adj.)
Antonyms

Replace with Synonym:
confident

confident
positive
certain
convinced
assured
cocksure
indisputable
undoubted

Replace   Look Up   Previous   Cancel

they are looking for a synonym for an adjective they should make sure the word suggested in the thesaurus is *also* an adjective. To use the thesaurus first **select** the word you'd like to replace and then select **Tools, Language, Thesaurus**.

4. AutoCorrect

Word automatically corrects common spelling and/or typing errors. If you type *the* as t-e-h, for example, Word will automatically correct the mistake. To see the list of words that are corrected automatically select **Tools, AutoCorrect**. AutoCorrect may also be customized—either to create shortcuts (such as having the initials of your name, e.g., **dlb** automatically be replaced by your full name, e.g., Dilbert Leghorne Boil) or to include misspellings that you tend to make (e.g., replace *auotbiography* with *autobiography* – a transposition I often make).   Be careful not to use initials that create a word (for example if your name were Andrew Nolan Doyne and you used "**and"** as your AutoCorrect entry every time you typed the word *and* and pressed the spacebar, your name would be inserted).

To create an AutoCorrect entry select **Tools, AutoCorrect** and insert your entry in the appropriate boxes:
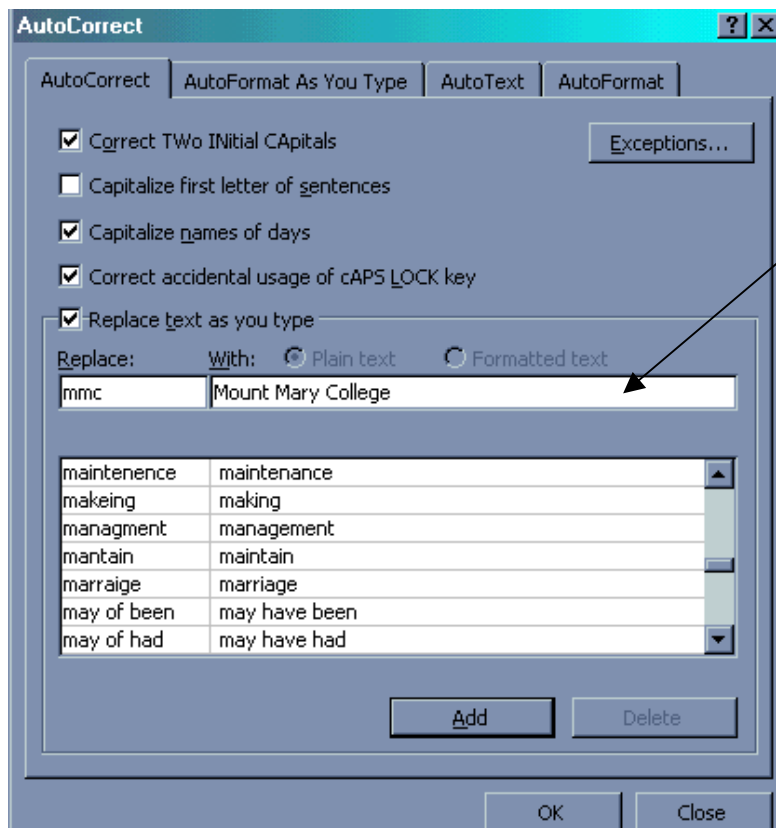
**An AutoCorrect shortcut for Mount Mary College**

AutoCorrect Dialog Box

5. Using a Split Screen to Revise

Splitting the screen so that one window shows the original document and the other shows a blank document (where you will create your revision) helps you focus on small parts of the document at a time and have your original document as an ongoing reference.

To use this feature, first open the original document and then open up a new document (a blank document) and choose **Window, Arrange All**. The workspace will split horizontally to display the original document and the blank document (a vertical split would be more useful; perhaps they'll figure this out by the time Office 2000 comes out).

Using a Split Screen to Revise
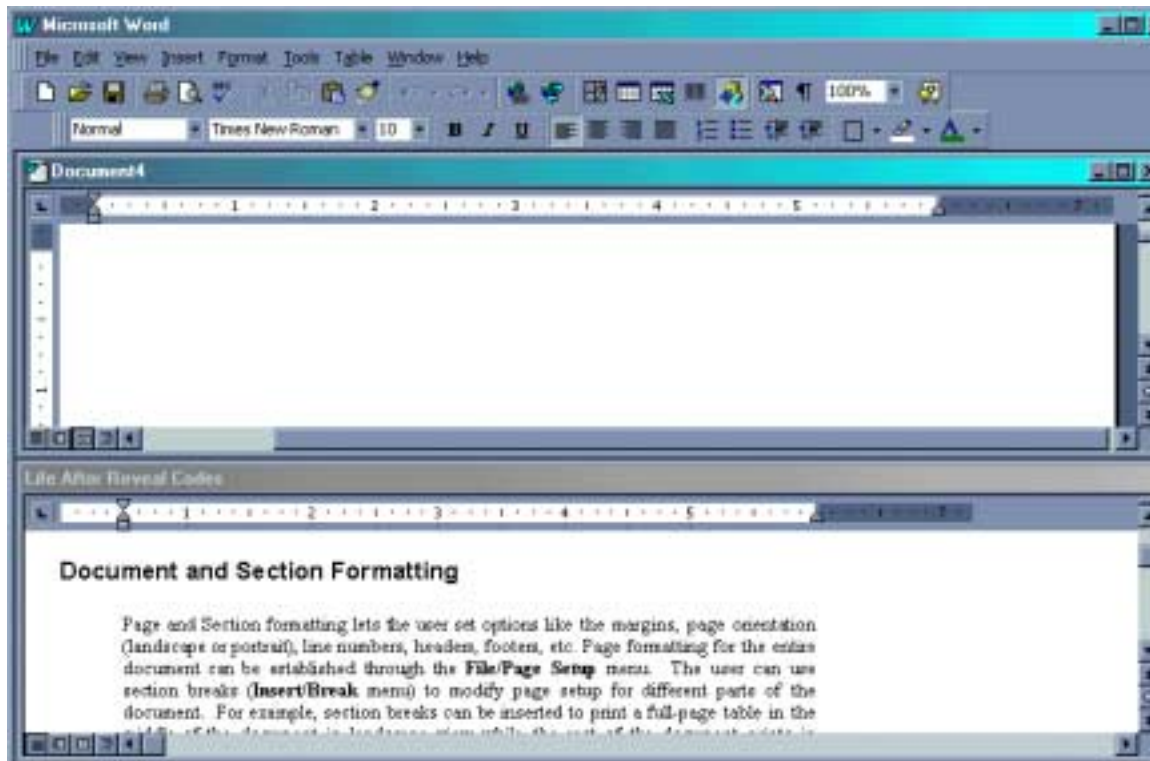
6. AutoSummarize

AutoSummarize may be used to generate a summary of a document or to highlight the most important ideas. The AutoSummarize feature can help students see—by the summary—whether their thesis is being developed adequately and/or create a summary quickly for use in a report or proposal.

To use AutoSummarize first open the document you want to summarize and then choose **Tools, AutoSummarize.** The dialog box gives you various

options, e.g., whether you want the document highlighted or summarized, how large or how small you wish the summary to be, and whether you want the summary as a separate document or as part of your original paper.
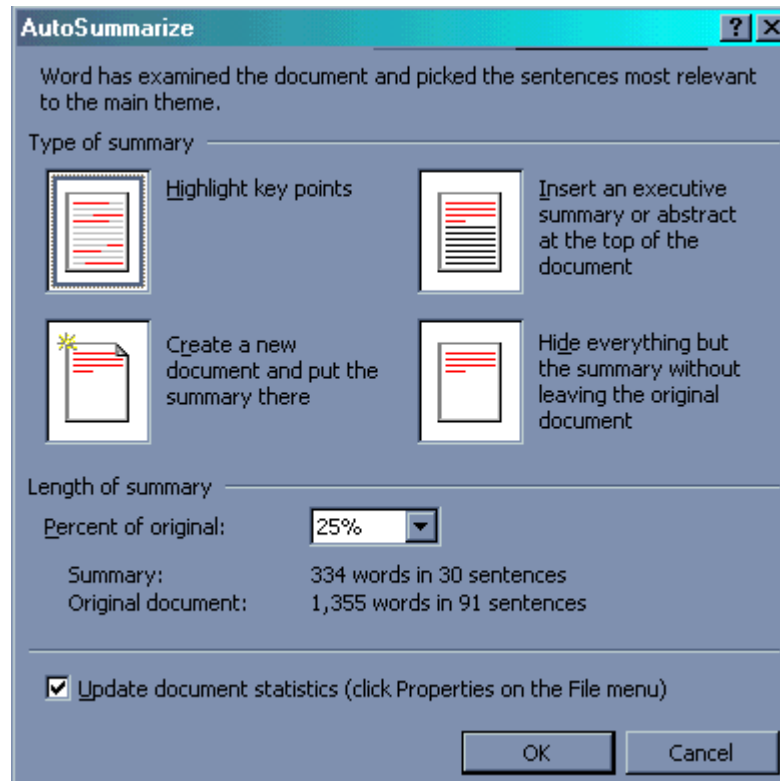
AutoSummarize Dialog Box

Often more transition will be needed to improve the sense of the summary but—other than that—it does a remarkable job of summarizing a document.

7. Other Revision Suggestions

Often mistakes will be skipped because they simply aren't seen. When writers proofread their documents several times they often become "blind" to the mistakes. To help students "see" their papers more clearly, suggest that they increase the **Zoom** to 150% or so or triple-space the document (temporarily) so that it is easier to read:

Zoom toolbutton:

Use the drop-down menu to increase or decrease the zoom (view) percentage.

Zoom increased to 150%

This at first confused the creature.   When he went
d, women fainted, and men threw rocks and shot bullet
ed by society. The creature then knew his appearance w
ople. He eventually found shelter in a pig's sty next to
k through a crack and observe the family inside.   He w

Triple-spaced Document

The creature experienced an extreme amount of loneliness.   When the creature

was first brought to life he was instantly rejected by his own creator. The creature had to

learn to live on his own. The creature soon learned to distinguish his different senses.

When he went into an old hut in search of food the old man inside cried out with horror