Own up to weaknesses. The authors added this language to the discussion after the reviewers pointed out that the section didn’t mention how the study’s low participation and response rates may have affected their results. “The reviewers were concerned about the generalizability of our findings and the representativeness of our respondents, both important critiques,” Miles says. “Including an acknowledgment of this keeps the discussion helps readers to keep this information about our study in mind when interpreting it.”
Example 2
The following is excerpted from a September Group Dynamics: Theory, Research and Practice (Vol. 12, No. 3) article led by Joseph R. Miles, a counseling psychology graduate student at the University of Maryland. The study finds that leaders of a group who share similar views of the world can help develop positive group dynamics.

Spell things out, even when you think they're clear. Miles's editor and reviewers asked him to provide an overarching framework for the paper and to make his hypotheses more overt. "We needed to be more explicit in how we were taking those strong I/O findings and applying them in a new way to group intervention research," he says. To do that, Miles listed his research questions as hypotheses and added more information on how previous research informed his conclusions.

Cut the jargon. The editor asked Miles to rewrite his complex, technical description of network analysis into a brief tutorial for readers who may have never heard of it. His revision not only made the concept more clear, it also shortened the section by about half a page, he says. He then had room to add two figures to the manuscript to help illustrate the model.
Ask back up your data. When the reviewer asked him to include other applied articles, Ravani said he knew he would need to add his group's performance measure to his study. This is part of the resubmission that took the most time, he says, because it required analyzing his data in a new way to develop a scale for what qualified as good, medium, and bad performance. "Because one experimenter might be biased in doing this, you have to have another person code some of the data as well, independently," he says.

Describe how your study fits into the big picture. Ravani's original discussion section did not include theoretical or practical implications, but the reviewers asked him to place his findings in a broader context. "They wanted us to provide some design principles that could be gained from our research, particularly in light of the citations that we added," he says.

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The art of revision

BY AMY NOVOTNEY
gradPSYCH staff

Even if you've been tweaking your manuscript for months, it's probably not perfect in the eyes of journal editors and reviewers. Chances are, you'll need to put many more hours of work into your research paper before it goes to press — work that can include additional data analysis and even reframing your hypotheses. Here are some examples of psychology students who took reviewer comments to heart, made their papers stronger and eventually saw their results published in top journals.

Example 1
The following is excerpted from the final text of a March Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied (Vol. 14, No. 1) article led by Raj Ratwani, PhD, who at the time of the manuscript's submission and review was a psychology graduate student at George Mason University. The study examines how the brain integrates cognitive and visual information when we view graphs and proposes ways to improve graph design to promote quicker comprehension.

Tip your hat to your predecessors. Ratwani's original literature review discussed the limitations of a previously studied task model, but the journal's editor and reviewers said his approach was too combative. They suggested that he take a more constructive approach and explore how the model emphasized different variables from his own model.

Appeal to a wide audience. At the suggestion of reviewers, Ratwani expanded his literature review to include additional articles showing how researchers have applied integration theories to graph comprehension, which they felt was relevant to his research question. "I had come at it from more of a cognitive science approach, focused on theory, but they wanted more of an applied psychology/human factors twist," Ratwani recalls.

Take an inside peek at how two students perfected their publications during the review process.
and momentum of the paper and not cause the reader to stop and ask, "Now, why is that there?"

**Follow the rules.** When you're ready to submit an article for publication, bone up on the journal's specifications, emphasizes Emil Rodolfa, PhD, editor of *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*. Otherwise, your paper may be rejected because it's too long or otherwise doesn't meet the journal's style or mission.

When Call and her adviser Jason Burrow-Sanchez, PhD, submitted a paper to the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, they followed the journal's formatting style and used the same terms the journal uses for key words — for example, "teens" to describe adolescents.

"In a way, you're selling your research," Call comments. "So when you start writing your dissertation or are thinking about publishing in a certain journal, it's really about understanding who your audience is."

**Monitor your mistakes.** Keep a running list of errors you tend to make or that professors have commented on in your papers, whether in grammar, punctuation or APA style, says Blair. Include any writing tips you want to keep in mind as well, such as using the active voice, avoiding run-on sentences, using specific verbs and employing strong topic sentences.

Consulting these notes each time you write a paper can help the writing and editing process become more efficient, says Blair. "You internalize the list over time," he says.

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_{Words from the wise}_

"Authors use various strategies in putting their thoughts on paper. The fit between author and strategy is more important than the particular strategy used."

— *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*

"[T]he first draft is the down draft — you just get it down. The second draft is the up draft — you fix it up. You try to say what you have to say more accurately. And the third draft is the dental draft, where you check every tooth, to see if it's loose or cramped or decayed, or even, God help us, healthy."

— Ann LaMott, writer, "Bird by Bird"

"Things should be made as simple as possible — but no simpler."

—Attributed to Albert Einstein

"Mistakes are the portals of discovery."

— James Joyce

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_{Tori DeAngelis is a writer in Syracuse, N.Y._}
Keep a running list of errors you tend to make or that professors have commented on in your papers, whether in grammar, punctuation or APA style.

a critical eye, whether it's organization, grammar or a specific content area.

Miller learned this midway through grad school when his adviser handed his draft to a colleague who had done significant writing and teaching in real-world applications of the topic he was writing about: ecological approaches to understanding competence problems in psychology training. The colleague "helped us deepen our understanding of the model and how to apply it and also to consider links between the model and our topic that we had not initially considered," he says.

Welcome criticism. Many students are shy about asking for input, fearing they'll be seen as incompetent. If you're in this camp, tell yourself it's your job to ask questions and to learn, Blair recommends.

Likewise, beware of tendencies to see feedback as a personal attack, Miller advises. Because he's been told he's a strong writer, he was initially taken aback by journal editors' critiques. But his attitude shifted when he found that incorporating their feedback led to a far stronger product.

"I've learned to frame it as a gift from someone who has taken the time and shared their knowledge about how to make it better," Miller says.

Print it out. Some students are so computer-centric that they prefer to keep the editing process paperless. But reading a hard copy helps you see mistakes and patterns you wouldn't otherwise, says Blair. Among other things, it may help you fix problems you inadvertently created or missed through spell check or grammar check, he says: "There's nothing like eyes on a paper to make a difference with that."

Create personal strategies. Develop your own tricks for editing your manuscript, experts add. Miller, for example, finds that writing detailed notes in the margins of print-outs helps him remember some of his ideas. And when an article is in its final stages, he plays the role of journal editor, asking whether

statements in the article reflect facts or opinions, for example, or whether all parts of the manuscript flow logically.

Blair recommends using any tactic that "fools your brain into looking at the manuscript differently." He suggests pulling out small sections of a paper and working on them separately, blowing up the type size, putting the type into a different font or reading sections of the paper aloud — anything that helps you see your words in a fresh light.

Spice it up. To enhance readability, consider adding a little flair to your writing, suggests Megan Call, a student at the University of Utah's counseling psychology program. "Including a brief example, personal story or even a humorous comment can make a paper more compelling and easier to read," she says.

A successful example is an article she recently read in the American Psychologist (Vol. 45, No. 12) by Jacob Cohen, PhD. Writing on the potentially deadly theme of statistics, Cohen made the piece so funny and entertaining, she couldn't put it down.

If you do try for a little color, though, do so judiciously, Call cautions. "Capturing people's attention takes extra time, thought and planning," she says. "Punchy writing should add to the focus
Craft a winning manuscript

Bogged down with your research paper or dissertation? Here’s how to make your writing and editing more manageable.

BY TORI DeANGELIS

Producing papers is a key part of academic success, but the process can seem mysterious and difficult. Common obstacles include time constraints, writer’s block and perfectionism — all factors that can lead to unclear language and missed deadlines.

Fortunately, many have traveled this path before you and developed strategies for producing well-written and even publishable manuscripts by their due dates or even a little before. Here is their advice on making that happen:

Plan ahead. Block out plenty of time to shape your article over multiple drafts, advises Michaela Bucchaneri, a University of Notre Dame fourth-year counseling psychology student who coaches undergrads on writing. “Even if you think your paper is great to begin with, it will inevitably take many more drafts than you think,” she says. “So start early and plan on many iterations.”

While there are no hard and fast rules for how long a paper or dissertation should take — dissertation requirements vary by department, and papers range in type, complexity and time requirements — a rule of thumb is to start writing as soon as you’ve gathered enough research, says Greg Blair, of Antioch New England. “Just find an artificial end point and stick to it,” he advises, “instead of looking for that one extra article you think you could use for your paper.”

Don’t forget to schedule breaks: There’s nothing like a fresh eye to catch errors or see something in a different light, Bucchaneri adds. If you’ve been writing for hours and are losing stamina, switch to a different task or break from the work entirely. If you’ve hit a conceptual sticking point, it may be time to regroup and read some more or consult with your adviser.

The key point is to refresh your mind before you go back to your task, Blair adds. It’s easy to procrastinate and turn a well-intentioned break into a diversion that pulls you off course.

Structure your work. The best paper begins with a plan, says Blair. Make an outline and use APA formatting style including a formal introduction, a formal conclusion, a serif font like Courier and double-spacing. (Use the sample paper starting on page 306 of the Publication Manual as a visual template.) These parameters will free you up to focus on content, he says.

Once you’re in the draft stage, assign each version a distinct purpose. In the first draft, put down your thoughts without censoring yourself. In the second, look for grammatical snafus, such lack of subject-verb agreement, run-on sentences and passive voice. And address potential plagiarism problems at this stage by making sure you’ve cited quotations properly, says Blair.

In the third draft, search for fine-grained punctuation or grammar problems you may have glossed over, such as whether you’ve used quotation marks properly. Also use this draft to polish your word choices, making sure you haven’t made such common mistakes as “affect” for “effect” or “its” for “it’s.”

Blair also advises waiting until the third draft to tackle the