# Providing Feedback to Facilitate Trainee Writing

## Brief Overview of the Writing Process

**Prewriting**

The process of research, outlining and determining the structure (blueprint) of the manuscript

**Drafting**

The process of putting the first words on the page, as determined by the outline; building the full structure

**Revising**

The process of rearranging the draft to make the manuscript logical and ordered; unlike building a house, prewriting, drafting and revising may be revisited multiple times.

**Editing**

The process of rearranging words and sentence structure for clarity and to improve grammar; cannot take place until revision is complete.

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## General Revision and Editing Tips

- **Provide feedback in written form**, whether on the document, in document comments, or by email. Written feedback helps prevent misremembering and misunderstanding while enabling trainees to refer to feedback as needed.
- **Fully explain feedback to prevent confusion and inaction.** A question mark or note about a confusing statement may point to an issue but does not provide actionable, constructive feedback. If a statement is confusing, describe (in writing) why and provide potential alternate interpretations to help your trainee more clearly understand the issue.
- **Conduct post-feedback discussions** to allow trainees the opportunity to thoughtfully respond and clarify feedback.
- **Give feedback appropriate to the stage of writing.** Revising and editing a draft at the same time can be frustrating as a writer and creates more work for the editor.

## Feedback During the Writing Process

**Outline:**

- Ask trainees to submit an outline of their manuscript before they begin to write. It should include all major sections and their key details.
- Focus feedback on the structure and proposed scientific content.

**Early Draft(s):**

- Suggest that trainees exchange early drafts with fellow lab members, enabling them to practice giving and receiving feedback. Encourage them to focus on the scientific content and structure.
- Focus feedback on broad revisions to the document, e.g., the logic of the structure and adding or rearranging scientific content. Note examples of major, reoccurring issues (e.g., paragraph structure, lack of supporting evidence or citations), but don't focus on correcting them yet.

**Later Draft(s):**

- Focus feedback on paragraph-level revision. Help improve logical flow, style, remove irrelevant information, and suggest alternate examples.
- In the final draft(s) focus on editing, correcting grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary.

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