Chapter 4 presents a rich view of revising, stressing revision as reseeing and rethinking: creating, not fixing, a final draft. The case study of Sarah’s essay on coupons offers concrete examples of how drafts change radically, as Sarah rethinks her guiding research question. Her use of a revision agenda provides goals for each revision. It is important to point out to students that Sarah is in complete control at each stage of the revision process; she decides what changes to make and how to develop the draft into a final product. The decisions she makes are intuitive, recursive, and logical; each revision moves toward a tighter thesis, a clearer focus, and more relevant detail. As she moves from her early discovery draft toward a less personal analysis of where coupons come from and how they are used, she deletes material, reshapes details to carry more weight, and constantly reconsider her purpose and her audience. It will be useful for students to note that Sarah is a “real writer” who works hard to “get it right”: her first draft was not her final draft.

Sarah engages in a great deal of thinking-in-writing and drafting as well as revising. Although she ends up “throwing away” the bulk of her discovery draft, she reclaims some of the personal perspective expressed in it, demonstrating for students the ways in which planning, drafting, and revising are interrelated. The final draft of the essay is developed through Sarah’s commitment to these processes of writing. The case study rounds out the overview of the writing process, offering students a model to follow as they pursue their own work.

The Eudora Welty interview that opens the chapter introduces its major themes and is worth pausing to discuss. Her scissors-and-pins style of revision gives students a concrete image of the global revision most professionals practice, and her experience of not recognizing a proof page of her own manuscript is a memorable example of a writer examining her work “with the eyes of the cold public.” The switch from writer to reader defamiliarizes a writer’s text, allowing for objectivity, which students need when they revise.
LOOKING TO REVISE, READING TO REVISE, REVISION AGENDA

Although the nine-year distance from a draft recommended by Horace in *Ars Poetica* is unrealistic, the “looking” and reading strategies recommended in this chapter promote the detachment necessary to “re-vision.” One way to gain a fresh perspective is through others’ eyes. Revision workshops and peer response groups provide means by which this perspective may be offered. You may wish to photocopy several of your students’ drafts and have the whole class read for subject, audience, and purpose. Or you may wish to use peer response guides such as the sample revision agenda in the third suggested collaborative classroom activity at the end of this chapter.

Another way to gain a fresh perspective is through role playing. Although students may need some nudging, adopting one of the roles—“impatient patient,” listener, contract reviewer—teaches valuable lessons. To promote this activity, you might model the process by distributing a piece of your writing and commenting on the piece in all three roles. Not only does role playing encourage an objective look at one’s own writing; it also encourages decentered, objective thinking and the development of critical thinking.

Finally, the revision agenda offers an effective tool for revision because it forces the student to make an objective statement of the paper’s goals, strengths, and weaknesses before thinking-in-writing about changes in the next draft. Asking students to turn in their revision agendas with their drafts allows you some insight into the students’ evaluative strategies and revision processes. With this information, you can identify students who need to expand their revision repertoire, offer them individual help, and encourage them to see a tutor at the Writing Center.

REVISING: A CASE STUDY

The case study disabuses students of the notion that revision is just window-dressing, as Sarah produces four substantially different drafts (a discovery draft, a revision for subject, a revision for audience, and a revision for purpose). Sarah’s willingness to completely reconceive subject, audience, and purpose may be surprising to students because her efforts make it clear that revision is hard, although creative, work. The examples of her drafts underscore the fact that there are many ways to approach a topic.

Revision Agenda
1. What did I try to do in this draft?
2. What are its strengths and weaknesses?
3. What revisions do I want to make in my next draft?

As simple as these questions may seem, they are enormously important in helping students make decisions about their writing because the questions teach students to look critically at their own writing and the reasons behind their statements. Sarah’s responses to these questions provide a good model for students.

Exercises (p. 93)

1. Sarah begins by drafting a personal narrative about her experience with coupons in order to explore the subject of shopping with coupons. She then revises her hypothesis to a less personal perspective when she realizes she wants to classify three kinds of coupon users. As she continues to think about her subject, information she has obtained from interviews and from reading helps her broaden the subject to how coupons are delivered to customers. Finally, she decides to address the question of how advertisers use coupons to control what consumers buy. Sarah reinstates some of her original personal narrative in the final essay, but in a revised form, concentrating only on the coupon she finds in her box of cereal. Her subject has remained the same throughout the four drafts, but she has shaped the subject by branching out from personal experience to identify an argument about how coupons work in the economic system.

2. In her discovery draft, Sarah rightfully concerns herself with defining her subject in order to develop it, and not with audience. She begins to consider her audience as she prepares the second draft. She moves away from the personal narrative of her discovery draft and becomes more analytical. She realizes that she wants to write to inform her audience about coupons and the kind of shoppers who use them. She omits the personal story about shopping behind “Mom” and her coupons, but recognizes that she has not yet told readers anything about the coupon system. To solve this problem, Sarah revises her thesis for the third draft: “Once we start tracking them [coupons], we discover that they come to us through a complex delivery system.” The draft has now become less writer oriented and more reader oriented. Sarah’s final draft argues that “coupons are part of a complex conspiracy to control what [consumers] buy.” This final draft embodies both personal experience and information Sarah found through interviews and reading. Although she
remains critical of her work (she finds the third paragraph “dull” and concludes she would like to revise the third and the fifth paragraphs), she feels she has finished the essay.

You might point out to students that despite all the revision Sarah has done for this essay, she still feels a need to revise further. You might also point out that each draft employs a “working title” that changes as Sarah redefines the focus of the essay. The title helps orient the reader to the text and helps Sarah maintain her focus as she rewrites.

As a way to provide continuity between chapters, you might continue to use Wurman’s theory of “information rings” from Chapter 2 in discussing Sarah’s research. She begins with personal information and ends up with a socioeconomic perspective.

3. Sarah begins with a desire to tell a story about her personal experience with coupons and claims that she would “rather save my dignity than my money.” However, in reassessing her original thesis, she realizes she doesn’t even know what she meant when she talked about “saving dignity.” This realization leads her to develop a new hypothesis (“coupons can be classified into three categories”). Still dissatisfied as she reads through her second draft, she again redefines the purpose of her essay and on the third draft concentrates on providing information about coupons rather than entertainment about using them. Through each draft, Sarah shifts from the position of writer to the position of reader and conscientiously revises the thesis that defines the purpose for the essay. The aim of her essay shifts from personal narrative to exposition to argument as she finalizes her purpose. At the same time, her subject becomes more defined as she discovers what her purpose is.

Using Sarah’s revision agendas, students might map Sarah’s progress as she works her way through the first stage of revision—rethinking, reordering, and rewriting large portions of her original discovery draft. They might then compare Sarah’s revision process with their own.

4. Sarah does a lot of Welty-type revising—discarding, adding, moving things around. For example, the detail at the end of the third draft (the coupon in the box of Raisin Bran) becomes the “hook” for opening her fourth draft. Likewise, details in the third draft about distribution through newspapers and the U.S. Postal Service are deleted in favor of an analysis of how advertisers study coupon design. It should be clear to students that Sarah’s changes are global changes that reflect her process of rethinking her ideas.
Students may not think that Sarah’s final draft is her best draft; they may prefer the first personal story, or they may be interested in her third draft, which concentrates on delivery systems. (See assignment 8, “Evaluate,” on page 103.) However, the fourth draft appears to satisfy the goals Sarah herself defined through the process of revising. This essay balances her personal experience with a socioeconomic phenomenon and responds to the original assignment: How has the economy had a direct impact on your life?

**REVISING ON YOUR COMPUTER**

The demands of revising are enough to win even the most resistant student over to the practice of composing at the computer. However, some researchers have observed that many students fail to revise globally on the computer, which suggests that student writers need instruction in specific strategies for using the computer’s capabilities for revising. For this reason, you should demonstrate and monitor the various revising strategies recommended in Chapter 4. Additionally, be on the lookout for students’ tendencies to become preoccupied with sentence-level changes and neglectful of larger, organizational and thematic changes. Here are some suggestions:

- Demonstrate and require practice in text manipulations—cutting and pasting, adding and deleting blocks of text, reordering paragraphs, using the “Find” function to locate specific parts of the text.
- Annotate or ask peers to annotate students’ drafts on screen (either in the text or at the end of a text).
- Insist that students produce print copies of their drafts to read, mark up, and evaluate for revision.
- Teach students how to use the information they get from text-feedback programs judiciously, perhaps through in-class exercises and demonstrations.

If your class has access to a computer lab, ask for additional instruction with an emphasis on simple word-processing techniques. While many of your students may be already familiar with using computers, there may be some who have never used computers or who do not have access to a computer of their own. Stress to students who are just learning to use a computer that they don’t need to learn everything at once. Begin with learning how to set up a file; then practice typing text on the screen. Reading virtual text is a different experience from reading print text; it will take a while for novice word processors to feel at ease moving about on the screen, where text is fluid. Once they become more proficient, you will need to
help them remember that the primary goal is in learning to write for a specific audience and purpose. The computer is simply a tool for writing. What counts is how well they can express their ideas, not how the computer can make texts appear professionally printed.

**READINGS**

“New Products,” Andy Rooney

Many students will recognize Andy Rooney as the satirical commentator for the CBS show *60 Minutes*. You might begin the discussion by asking how the experience of reading this piece by Rooney differs from watching him on television. The written piece contains the humor that characterizes his spoken commentary, as well as sharp cultural criticism.

**Discussion questions (p. 96).** What evidence does Rooney use to distinguish between genuine innovation and cosmetic change? If the subject were writing rather than manufacturing, how would you characterize the difference between a *revised* text and a *changed* text?

Much of Rooney’s evidence is general, although he begins with an example of a common household substance for unclogging sink drains: Drano. Despite a variety of newer and supposedly improved products—“powders, liquids and pellets” packaged in “cans, tubes, bottles and plastic”—Rooney sticks with his old standby, Drano, since he has no proof of the superiority of the newer products. He then moans that “too many big companies” simply use a different color of paint for their “Official Mickey Mousetrap” and call it “innovation.” Rooney cites examples of automobile manufacturers: “You can tell a Saab from a Toyota, but you can’t tell a Chevrolet from an Oldsmobile unless you own one.” His general commentary about the lack of serious innovation is buttressed by a few easily recognized specific examples in the automotive industry. Mostly he concentrates on making the point that new packaging is not a new product.

The obvious point of the essay for students is the analogy with writing. The emphasis on Chapter 4 is on the first stage of revising: global revision that rethinks the basic concept. A revised text has been reordered and substantially rewritten; a changed text has been “fixed”—a few substitutions here and there—but not redefined in terms of purpose.

“Shopping on TV: Romance and Chat,” Walter Goodman
Goodman explores yet another way in which the television media have changed our lives: through “television shopping,” one need not even leave home in order to purchase goods. Everything from pots and pans to jewelry can be bought at reduced prices from the QVC network Goodman describes in his article. All you need (besides access to the network) is a special QVC card. What Goodman calls “show-biz consumerism” offers entertainment through shopping.

**Discussion questions (p. 97).** How does Goodman’s description of “The Jewelry Showcase” explain the appeal of this kind of shopping? In what ways is it “safely impersonal” and “rewardingly personal”? What does Goodman say about how this “innovation” will revise the way consumers shop?

The most obvious appeal to shoppers is the reduced pricing for items easily attainable through television shopping. Goodman describes the approach as “soft,” with an “easy tone” and a clean-cut, attractive salesman who remains relaxed throughout the pitch: a “video gigolo” who gently entices viewers into believing they needed an amethyst for $53.82. An additional attraction is the possibility of “getting to chat briefly with the host.” Television shopping provides a distance between shopper and salesman, making it “safely impersonal,” requiring only the minimum interaction. It possibly creates a “feeling of community” among shoppers who share a particular interest (porcelain dolls, tools), thereby making it “rewardingly personal.” Because television shopping offers viewers “something to do as well as to watch,” along with its other appeals, Goodman suggests that QVC and the Home Shopping Network are only the beginning of a revised way of shopping. Just as catalogue sales have increased as more Americans work outside the home, television shopping allows these people to stay at home and shop simultaneously. The blending of entertainment with carrying out mundane shopping errands could hold great appeal for many.

**“Packaged Deception,” Marya Mannes**

Mannes’s complaint about how American manufacturers deceive consumers was written and delivered to a U.S. congressional subcommittee thirty years ago, but the substance of her argument—that consumers are deceived by packaging—continues to be an issue for consumer activists. (These days, the attention is focused on how goods are described. What does “environmentally safe” mean on packaging? What does “fat free” actually mean in terms of “good-fat, bad-fat” intake? What is the meaning of “all natural” ingredients? One might also notice the weight of coffee bought in cans: some cans hold one pound; others hold only 12 ounces.) Mannes identifies herself as a writer and a housewife who buys what is sold to her on faith.
Teaching with a Purpose

because of the packaging. She writes that “these days, the word consumer is sometimes spelled s-u-c-k-e-r,” thereby highlighting consumer responsibility to know what the manufacturers are up to. Her argument centers on how consumers are at the mercy of what manufacturers offer for sale and how it is packaged. Her point of view, of course, is clearly that of the consumer.

Discussion questions (p. 99). How does Mannes demonstrate the deception of American manufacturers? Why does she think legislation is necessary to correct these practices? In the thirty years since she gave this talk, how have manufacturers changed their behavior? What new forms of deception have they packaged?

Mannes gives examples of baby food jars and breakfast foods. Brand A’s new jars and Brand B’s new boxes, identical in size to their old jars and boxes, contain smaller amounts of food. This information is available only in the small print on the label, which is hard to see, particularly by distracted parents shopping with young children. Mannes then points out confusion in the language used by manufacturers to package large amounts: “giant,” “jumbo,” “quart” vs. “tall quart,” and so on. What exactly do these measurements mean? They are not regulated, so each brand decides for itself how much is contained in a “giant” size. Mannes cites other examples of packaging differences that confuse consumers, such as the “funny shapes of bottles” that make it impossible to estimate how much each different bottle contains. The basic problem Mannes points to is the lack of consistency in packaging. She calls on Consumers Union and government agencies to regulate weights and measures, maintaining that the public needs protection from what she feels are dishonest practices. Since the press and television depend on advertising for support, they are not likely to bring the problem of discrepancies in packaging to the attention of Congress or the American people. Her plea rests not on the legality of the various practices but on the ethics of representation. She states early in her essay that she is addressing “certain practices in the market which manage to evade the spirit of the law while adhering by an eyelash to the letter of the law.”

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Narrate: Students may discover, as Sarah did, that simply telling a story about their experience doesn’t do all they hope it will. In order to analyze their expectations and how these expectations were revised by their experience, students need to distance themselves from the event. As Sarah learned, there is a difference between recounting her experience and using her experience to create a subject.
2. Observe: This assignment asks students to provide clear definitions of the categories. What behaviors constitute the reluctant shopper? How can you tell by looking? Is there a gender difference in how men and women shop? Students might observe shoppers in favorite shops and then go into a shop unfamiliar to them. Do they still observe the same patterns of behavior? (Does the reluctant clothes shopper also show reluctance in the supermarket?) Students might also take note of the season, day of the week, and time of day they observe. Does this make a difference in how shoppers shop?

3. Investigate: Most colleges and universities are constantly changing their web sites. As advertisers and public relations experts become more adept at the strategies of “visual rhetoric,” everything from frame color and font size to navigational paths becomes a subject for constant revision. This assignment should help students see how their university represents itself to its various audiences.

4. Collaborate: Modeling how consumers can work together to protect themselves, this assignment offers students experience in understanding investments and record keeping, and in writing and formatting a guide for an audience of coupon-minded consumers. Students might ask themselves: If as a consumer I feel manipulated by the system of exchange, in what ways do I gain control by participating in a consumer project such as this one? How do citizens shift from the position of victim to the position of decision maker? Students might market their own guidebook as a money-making project for a school project.

5. Read: Unpacking the language of the article for its assumptions about the goals of marketing can help students identify the intended audience. They might begin by underlining words and phrases that strike them as “business jargon.” How will these words be replaced in order to speak the language of consumer advocacy? What about the basic argument of the piece? Is it enough to revise a few words and phrases? As an exercise in revising, students may find it easier to revise an article they did not write themselves than to revise their own writing.
6. Respond: Students might want to adopt this as a class assignment and write either individual letters, one collective letter, or several group-authored letters. This hands-on experience in analyzing Rooney’s proof lends insight into how important it is to make valid claims that can be backed up by evidence. Students might also expand the project in order to find out how various companies define a “new product.” At what point do they decide to label a product as “new and improved,” and what exactly did they change in order to use this labeling? By adapting Rooney’s questions to their own research, they may find answers not found in Rooney’s essay.

7. Analyze: Goodman’s attitude is clearly skeptical of what he calls “show-biz consumerism.” He speaks of the use of “standard gimmicks” and invites his readers to tune in for “the spiritual hour” only “if there’s another blizzard.” The essay also reveals some stereotyping of the salesperson (Goodman describes only a salesman, whom he labels as a “video gigolo”) and of the shopper (whom he imagines as “a woman alone with her set on a Sunday afternoon”). Students might examine Goodman’s choices of examples and his representation of viewers and then compare his comments with their own experience of watching the program he describes. They might also conduct some interviews to find out who watches such programming and draw up a profile of these viewers.

8. Evaluate: As an in-class practice, students might use the new set of directions they have established for improving Sarah’s essay to revise the essay themselves. Students might work in groups both to write the new revision goals and to revise the essay. This assignment is a natural follow-up to the last part of question 4 on page 93, which asks students which draft they like best. After revising Sarah’s essay, they might then work individually, evaluating and revising their own essays.

9. Argue: Assignments 9 and 10 allow students to experience both sides of the argument about “deceptive packaging.” Recent issues have shifted away from amounts of food to identifying methods of production and safe levels of pesticides. Some recent legal cases regarding this issue include the health warnings placed on cigarette and wine labels. Other cases still being debated include the “healthy heart” stamp and the identification of the origin of grapes and other produce. Chicken must be labeled as “free-ranging” or commercially grown. While not particularly controversial, organically grown produce is generally differentiated from conventionally grown produce and has appeared
more recently in standard grocery stores as demand for pesticide-free food has increased. What has become controversial is the level of chemicals allowed in foods for children. Students might visit a local grocery story or health food store and conduct some interviews with merchants to learn of some of the more recent labeling controversies.

10. Argue: Shifting position from consumer to manufacturer, students experience the complexities of promoting a product in a free enterprise system by revising Mannes’s argument. Essential to unpacking advertising strategies as well as Mannes’s testimony is an emphasis on language and how it is used to persuade. In the case of advertising, visual elements are also important. What are the subtleties of packaging for any kind of lobbyist?

USING THE WRITING CENTER

Students often come to the Writing Center hoping that tutors will tell them how to revise their papers. What they learn is that tutors do not supply answers: they only help students make decisions about their writing. When students come to work with a tutor on revising drafts, the areas of concentration are broken down so students can focus on only one issue at a time. Such areas are the development of ideas, organization of ideas, and clarity of expression. During the drafting stage, students are still working on finding out what they want to say. Tutors, who may not have the same technical background on the subjects students are writing about, are very helpful in providing students with nontechnical perspectives. They will say “I don’t understand what you mean here,” “I find this interesting and wonder if you could tell me more,” and “Are there other examples of this you have observed that can strengthen your thesis?”

After students and tutors have introduced themselves and students have read their papers aloud, tutors might ask writers to identify the specific parts of the papers that have been most troubling. Tutors can help by asking the students to clarify purpose, audience, and subject. At all stages of the writing process, tutors and students will reexamine these three issues to revise in ways that will help the writers say what they mean. Students might make several appointments to work with tutors to concentrate on the most pressing need. What do students view as their own hierarchy of needs within the context of this particular paper?

Are students revising an early draft or a final draft? When is the paper due? This information can help tutors work with students on the most pressing needs. If the paper is due next week, students can work to strengthen the development and organization of ideas in the paper and return to the Writing Center to review the
changes and work on final editing. If the paper is due tomorrow or during the next hour, all a tutor can do is help students make surface, sentence-level corrections. Therefore, urge your students to make appointments early enough to allow actual revision of their papers.

You can help by letting your students know that all writers are welcome at the Writing Center, regardless of writing ability. Writing Centers are not “fix-it” places that only address grammar in writing; they are places to concentrate on ideas. When thinking is clear, grammar will be clear and writing will be clear. Do not let your students believe that Writing Centers are proofreading services where papers can be dropped off at 10:00 A.M. and picked up fully laundered at 5:00 P.M. Writing Centers are places where writers talk about writing so that ideas become untangled, revised, and clarified.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM

• The revision exercises (p. 93) could be handled as a collaborative problem-solving activity. For example, you might divide the class into groups, asking each to formulate an answer to one of the revision exercises and then report findings back to the class. You might also ask each group to answer all the questions; the groups could then compare their answers.

• Divide the class into three or four groups, and give each group the same collaborative writing task: “Compose a one- or two-paragraph definition of the word revision for third graders. Your group may wish to use an analogy to help the children understand the concept and to include some instructions or guidelines adapted from the information in this chapter.” After about thirty minutes of work, each group reads its definition to the rest of the class.

• Although there are a number of ways to structure the peer feedback students offer one another, one method is to have students compose a revision agenda for one another. Here is an example:
Revision Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer respondent:</th>
<th>Writer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What did the writer try to do in this draft?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the strengths and weakness of this draft?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What revisions do you recommend for the next draft? (Give practical, concrete feedback to help the writer revise, such as “Combine paragraphs 2 and 3” or “Add an example to paragraph 4.” The writer will decide whether to heed your advice.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCES AND ADDITIONAL REFERENCES**


For detailed long- and short-term case studies of student writers at work, see *Seeing for Ourselves: Case Study Research by Teachers of Writing*, ed. Glenda L. Bissex and Richard H. Bullock (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1987).


Noel Williams and Patrik Holt provide a collection of essays focusing on computers as tools for writers and the ways in which these tools can be used in writing classrooms in *Computers and Writing: Models and Tools* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1989).

Nancy Welch explores through a case study the connections between personal relationships and revision in “Revising a Writer’s Identity: Reading and Re-modeling in a Composition Class,” *College Composition and Communication* 47.1 (Feb. 1996): 41–61. See also Lad Tobin’s *Writing Relationships: What Really Happens in the Composition Class* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1993).