

Next Steps Plans Across the Disciplines

A Next Steps Plan is a short end-comment that tells a student exactly what to do in their next draft, in order of importance. When students understand that you're looking for more than a cursory tidy-up of their paper (i.e. fixing typos or making sentences 'flow better'), real revision is harder to ignore. When you write a Next Steps Plan, students have a better plan of action and can easily share what you're looking for with a Writing Center consultant. Below are three examples of a Next Steps Plan across different disciplines.

Example 1 — Business (a strategy memo that doesn't make its argument instantly clear)

What's working: Your grasp of Glossier's community-marketing model is very strong, and your third paragraph connecting their Instagram strategy to their low ad spending is sharp analysis.

To work on next: Your actual recommendation for Maybelline's marketing strategy doesn't appear until the final paragraph, so your reader—the VP—won't know what you're advising until they've nearly finished reading. And two of your central claims aren't yet backed by data.

Your revision plan:

- Move your recommendation to the top of the memo. State what you're advising the VP in the first two sentences, then defend it.
- Support your 2 key claims (Glossier's growth is slowing and Maybelline's retail footprint is an advantage) with specific figures from the Unit 3 data.
- Anticipate Maybelline VP's most likely objection and address it directly.
- Once the structure is settled, fix the sentence fragments and comma splices (see [this](#) and [this](#) Writing Center handout), but not before, since some of your words may change.

Example 2 — History (an 'all about' paper that summarizes instead of arguing)

What's working: You clearly did the reading because your account of the events leading to the 1917 revolution is accurate and detailed. The chronology is all correct.

To work on next: Right now, your paper narrates what happened rather than arguing a position on it. The assignment asks *which* factor was most decisive, but your essay gives roughly equal weight to all of them, so no argument emerges. This is the most important thing to fix.

Your revision plan:

- Decide which factor you think was most decisive and, in 1-2 sentences, state it as a contestable thesis at the end of your introduction.
- Reorganize the body to support that claim rather than just marching through events in order. Each paragraph should advance the argument you stated in your thesis—you can make sure each paragraph has an argumentative focus by following the TEA (Topic Sentence, Evidence, Analysis) paragraph structure we discussed in class.
- Write a counterargument paragraph: address why a reader might think differently to you, then argue against that interpretation with evidence from your sources.

Example 3 — Lab report (accurate but under-interpreted)

What's working: Your methods section is excellent because you've written it with precision and conciseness—this experiment is replicable. Your data table is clean and correctly labeled.

To work on next: The discussion section reports your results but doesn't yet *interpret* them. You state what happened but now the reader needs to know what it means, whether it supports your hypothesis, and why the anomaly in trial three might have occurred.

Your revision plan:

- In the discussion section, explicitly state whether your results support or challenge your hypothesis, and point to the specific data that supports it.
- Address the trial-three anomaly directly rather than ignoring it. A good discussion accounts for unexpected results and talks about them and why they might have happened.
- In your discussion, add one or two sentences naming a limitation of your method (for example, your small sample size). Acknowledging limitations shows scientific maturity and tells the reader how much to trust your conclusions.