Ratiocination

Ratiocination usually means to reason with a process. Strictly speaking, this is revising with a process, but let’s not quibble about semantics. Use this method to edit your own or a peer’s paper.

If you have a highlighter and a color pen, this is easy. Otherwise, you will need to figure out how you can distinctly mark each separate item.

1. “To be or not to be?” When you’re writing, most often the answer to that question is “not to be.” It is nobler in the mind to figure out more action verbs. Using a color pen circle every form of the verb “to be.” When you’re finished, write the number of ‘to be’ verbs at the top of the paper. When you revise, try as much as possible to cut the number of ‘to be’ verbs in HALF. Reminder—“to be” verbs include, but are not limited to:

   be   being   been   am   are   was   were   is

2. Next, we need to examine sentence length and (GASP!) fragments and run-ons. Using your highlighter, highlight the first sentence. Then skip the second sentence, highlight the third sentence. Continue the pattern through the entire paper. Take extra caution—once you highlight the wrong sentence you cannot correct it. When you are finished, evaluate your sentence lengths. Are all of your sentences short? Do you vary the length, or are your sentences all about the same length? Did you find any fragments or run-ons? Make sure the pattern of sentence lengths vary.

3. This step will help you change the beginnings of your sentences. Box the first work of each sentence using your color pen. Did you notice a pattern? Are you beginning too many sentences the same way? Make sure you vary
the beginnings of your sentences. Also, check to see that your beginning word is capitalized.

4. Now, let’s rid ourselves of those ‘banned words.’ Mark, with an X, instances of words such as VERY, GOT, GET, NICE, BAD, THING, GOOD, STUFF, AWESOME, WONDERFUL, COOL, OKAY, and other similar words. Try to use more vivid words in their place. NOTE: if you are using ‘so’ at the beginning of a sentence, chances are that it is a transition, and you don’t need to change it unless you can determine a better transition word.

5. Circle the word “I”. Did you capitalize it? The word ‘I’ is ALWAYS capitalized.

6. Circle the word ‘a lot’ if it isn’t used correctly. If you have written it as ‘alot’ then you NEED to circle it.

7. Underline the event in your sentence for EDITING purposes. Do not leave the underline in your final draft. By underlining the event in your body paragraphs you can see that you have written about the things you have chosen as well as not combined events. Each event should be worthy of its own paragraph, right?

8. Did you label the ‘attention grabber,’ ‘lead sentences,’ and ‘thesis’ in your introduction paragraph?

9. Put an X over repetitive words. Could you use other nouns, pronouns in their place---remember we have synonyms to help us. 😊