

A Critical Thinking Technique: The Revision Sprint

This *Revision Sprint* requires students to have a little knowledge of traits language...because the racers you assign to this task are based on elements of the writing traits. As students prepare to revise a draft, they first run a “race” through their writing.

The “sprint” works this way. The teacher decides which traits-based runners will be running through the students’ papers. If students are really knowledgeable with traits language, or if there are classroom resources (posters, for example) that help them readily see the differences between the 6 traits, you can name the four (or fewer) racers after the writing traits. A race might, therefore, be run between:

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| <u>Race idea #1:</u> | or | <u>Race idea #2</u> |
| 1. Idea Development | | 1. Organization |
| 2. Voice | | 2. Sentence Fluency |
| 3. Word Choice | | 3. Voice |
| 4. Organization | | 4. Conventions |

I always based my sprints on what traits we had been working on most recently or which traits I saw a lot of students struggling with. Personally, I didn’t like using Conventions as a racer when they were working on revision from first to second draft; instead, I often ran Convention-specific races (see below) as the students edited their second drafts into final drafts. These *Revision Sprint* sheets can also be used as *Editing Sprints*.

For students just learning traits language and concepts, I found it very helpful to run trait-specific races, instead of just running the big traits against the big traits. These really helped students see the specifics of each trait. For example, if my students had been working on organization, I could run one of the following races:

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| <u>Organization race #1:</u> | or | <u>Organization race #2</u> |
| 1. Introduction | | 1. Logical Sequence |
| 2. Conclusion | | 2. Pacing |
| 3. Paragraphing | | 3. Introduction & Conclusion connection |
| 4. Thoughtful Transitions | | 4. Transition Variety |

In fact each sprint can focus on singular traits, especially if who classes are honing or struggling with single traits. Here are some good races to run through your students’ drafts:

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| <u>Idea Development Race:</u> | <u>Voice Race:</u> | <u>Convention Race:</u>
<small>(works well before editing too)</small> |
| 1. Stays on Topic | 1. Conviction | 1. Spelling |
| 2. Sharp Details | 2. Audience awareness | 2. Comma Control |
| 3. Showing, not Telling | 3. Interesting word use | 3. Complete Sentence Use |
| 4. Unique examples | 4. Sounds good when read aloud | 4. Dialogue Punctuation |

Whatever the race being run, the student reads his/her own draft and decides which of the four (or fewer) runners performed the best in the writing; that “runner” is named the winner and an arrow is drawn from that runner to the finish line. The student writer also determines which runner ran the worst, and where

the other racers ended up when the race was over; this is shown by drawing arrows from the runners to where they would be on the track when the winner was at the finish line. When students trust each other, a response group can run this race on all its members' papers, as well as running it with their own writing. This gave my students great opportunities to talk about their different ideas on what would make the writing even better.

The Revision Sprint (a model)

Your Racers:	10 yards→20 yards→30 yards→40 yards→50 yards	Finish Line
 Voice		
 Word Choice		<div data-bbox="954 907 1432 1360" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>This example shows a student who has self-determined that his strongest runner (trait) was Word Choice and his weakest runner (trait) was Organization. The student agrees to revise his draft in such a way that Organization runs just as good a race as Word Choice, then begins planning ways to achieve that goal.</p> </div>
 Organization		
 Sentence Fluency		

Once the race is run, the student agrees to revise to somehow make the slower runners perform better in the paper's next draft. With some students, I simply asked them to help one of the slower runners perform better; with students who needed more or a challenge, I asked them to help all the slower runners perform better.

The best thing about this technique, in my opinion, is that no matter how skilled or challenged a student writer is, one trait has to win this race. Each student ends up with a strongest trait and traits that could be developed further.

The following page contains the *Revision Sprint* form I used with my students. My students attached it to the draft they were planning to revise or respond to.

The Revision Sprint

Up to four runners will sprint through your paper's rough draft...nothing like a good 50-yard dash to get your heart racing! Your teacher will tell you what names to give the runners; write their names below them.

When you read your paper, indicate which of the four runners won the race by drawing a big, thick arrow between that runner and the finish line; then, determine where the other three runners were on the track when the race was won by drawing each of them an arrow. Decide who wins and comes in last based on the names of the runners.

When you revise your draft, you will need to make sure **your slowest racer ties your fastest racer**. Before writing next draft, talk to your teacher about how you plan to make your slowest of runners a much better racer.

Your Racers:	10 yards→20 yards→30 yards→40 yards→50 yards	Finish Line
		
		
		
		