

PENNY LEARNING LITERATURE

Penny Makes It Stronger

A story about revising, Rearrange, Exchange, Add, Delete

Book Seven • The Make It Stronger Song

The Writing Academy®, LLC

© 2026 The Writing
Academy®, LLC. All rights
reserved.

This document is provided for
classroom instructional use. No part
may be reproduced for resale or
distribution outside the purchasing
campus without written permission
from The Writing Academy®, LLC.

Penny's essay tree was tall and full. Thesis, reasons, evidence, explanation, all the way up to a significance that reached for the sky. She set her pencil down with a happy thump. "Finished!" she announced. Champ wagged. But Mrs. Ray, reading over her shoulder, gave a gentle little hum. "It's good, Penny," she said. "Now let's make it its best." Penny's pencil froze halfway to her backpack. Its best? Wasn't good already good enough?

“I thought I was done,” Penny said.

Mrs. Ray smiled. “A first draft is never the end, it’s the beginning of something stronger. There’s a difference between two words that sound alike, Penny. EDITING fixes the little things, spelling, capitals, periods. But REVISING? Revising is how you make your ideas their very best. You don’t just correct it, you strengthen it.”

Penny sat back down. Strengthen it.

She liked the sound of that.

“Here’s all you have to remember,” said Mrs. Ray. “Just R-E-A-D.” She wrote the four letters across the top of Penny’s page. “Rearrange. Exchange. Add. Delete. Four ways to make any writing stronger. Read your draft with these four eyes, and watch what happens.” Penny picked up her pencil like a builder picking up a hammer. Time to build it better.

“R is REARRANGE,” said Mrs. Ray.

“Move your ideas so they flow.” Penny read her reasons and noticed her strongest one, the one about kids’ brains, was stuck way down at the bottom. “That one should come first,” she decided, and she drew an arrow to lift it up front. Just like that, her essay started strong instead of saving the best for last. “Rearrange it, move it around,” Penny hummed.

“E is EXCHANGE,” Mrs. Ray went on.

“Trade a tired word for a stronger one.”

Penny found the word good sitting in three different places, plain as toast.

She crossed out one good and wrote powerful. She swapped another for healthy, and a third for focused.

“Exchange it,” she said, “a stronger word found!” Her sentences sat up straighter, wearing their new words like Sunday clothes.

“A is ADD,” said Mrs. Ray. Penny hunted for a thin spot. Her explanation about sharing felt a little bare, so she added a detail: “When kids take turns on the swings, they are practicing patience they will use their whole lives.” More proof, more meaning. “Add it,” Penny whispered, “more detail, more proof.” Her thin branch grew leaves.

“And D,” said Mrs. Ray, “is DELETE.”

Penny frowned, she loved every word.

But there, in the middle, sat a sentence about her favorite swing that had nothing to do with learning at all. It was cute. It was also in the way. Penny took a breath and crossed it out.

“Delete it,” she said bravely, “cut what I don’t use.” Her essay felt lighter, and every sentence left behind had a job to do.

Penny read her whole essay again, top to bottom. It was the same tree, but stronger now, rearranged so it flowed, exchanged for better words, added to where it was thin, and trimmed of what it didn't need. "It really is its best now," she said, amazed. "And I didn't start over, I just made what I had stronger."

“Now you may edit,” said Mrs. Ray with a wink, “and sweep it clean for spelling and capitals, that’s a job for another day. But you did the big work first. You revised.” Penny beamed. She had thought she was finished three whole times in this story, and each time her writing had grown. Now she knew the secret: good writers are never quite done, they are getting stronger.

Penny sang the reviser's song, tapping out the letters R-E-A-D:

**My first draft's done, but I'm not through,
'cause a good writer knows what revising can
do!**

REARRANGE it! Move it around!

EXCHANGE it! A stronger word found!

ADD it! More detail, more proof!

DELETE it! Cut what I don't use!

Read it, revise it, make it strong!

From that day on, Penny never called a first draft finished. She called it a start. Then she read it four ways, Rearrange, Exchange, Add, Delete, and made it stronger every time. Her writing didn't just get corrected. It grew.

Now you know the reviser's secret too.
Editing fixes the little things, but
revising makes your ideas their best.
Just R-E-A-D: Rearrange so it flows,
Exchange for stronger words, Add
where it's thin, and Delete what's in
the way. You don't start over, you build
what you have into something better.

So the next time you finish a draft, do not put your pencil away just yet.

Smile like Penny and say, “Now let’s make it its best.” Read it four ways, and watch good writing become strong writing, one small, brave change at a time.