

# Proofreading

Proofreading is the final stage in the writing process. It is used to catch surface level errors such as misspellings, incorrect formatting, and grammar mistakes that could distract readers from the content of your writing.

Your job as proofreader is to focus on two things: individual words and individual sentences (check out our Cohesion handout for help with the latter). Make sure each specific word is right (watch out for things like verb tense and spelling) and that each individual sentence makes sense (watch out for things like incomplete sentences and grammar errors).

Take it one sentence at a time, focusing on each word as you read to make sure that it is the correct form of the word and that it's spelled correctly. Then reread the sentence, this time evaluating the sentence as a whole. Does it make sense? Did you stumble over any words or were there any parts that felt odd?

Now you can get started! You can use the tips below for help, but feel free to experiment to find what works best for you. Use the checklist (also found below) as a guide for what to focus on when proofreading, including common errors to watch out for.

## Proofreading Tips:

- Read your writing aloud. Reading aloud forces you to pronounce each word and helps you catch tiny, hard-to-find mistakes.
- Proofread for only one kind of error at a time. There are a lot of different kinds of errors, and it will be hard to catch everything if you focus on too many things at once.
- Take a break between writing and proofreading. Sometimes proofreading immediately after writing can trick your eyes into seeing what *should* be there instead of what *is* there, since what you meant to say is still fresh in your mind.
- Identify the most common errors in your own writing (professors' comments can help with this, or you may already notice some patterns in your writing). Make a list of these errors to use as a guide for what to focus on when you proofread.
- Circle punctuation marks as you go. Make sure each one is correct before moving on.

## Proofreading Checklist

- Are names spelled correctly? Are dates correct? Are titles of sources correct?
- Is each word spelled correctly? Pay special attention to words that have homophones (words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings), such as “to” and “too” or “your” and “you’re.” See our Commonly Confused Words handout for help.
- Watch out for common errors like dangling modifiers and subject/verb agreement. Check out our other handouts for help with these concepts.

- Is each sentence complete? Errors like run-on or incomplete sentences are common.
- Is the punctuation of each sentence correct? See our handouts for help with comma splices and other common punctuation errors.
- Have you used the right citation style? Is your in-text citation and works cited or bibliography page formatted correctly?
- Is the paper formatted the way the assignment guidelines ask? Check font type, font size, margins, title or title page, page numbers, spacing, word or page count, etc.

## **Conclusion**

Remember that proofreading is a learning process. The more you know, the better your proofreading will be. So trust your gut, and if you think something is off, research it. Knowing why something is right or wrong will help you become a better proofreader, editor, and writer.