

PROOFREADING



Following the revision stage (when the high-order issues are smoothed out), proofreading is the last stage of the writing process. Because proofreading is mechanical in nature, it requires practice and the development of precise “surface-level” reading skills. Here are some techniques to help you proofread.

Make a Checklist

A checklist will help you focus on your corrections. If you notice that you often make the same grammatical mistakes, you need to make a list of these errors and watch out for them when you proofread your work. A checklist will also be very useful when you find yourself confusing similar sounding words such as “than” and “then,” “its” and “it’s,” or “their” and “there,” among others. A checklist will not only direct your attention to specific errors and areas of weakness but also help you avoid them in the future.

Read Out Loud

Sometimes, it is easier to detect awkward phrasings and errors when you listen to your words. Apart from helping you find errors, reading out loud will also aid you in improving your **tone and diction**. This proofreading technique works well when you are checking to see if your choice of words is appropriate for the subject matter and your intended audience.

Read in “Reverse”

When we say “reverse,” we mean reading sentences from the end of the paper towards the beginning. (We don’t mean literally reading the sentence backwards.) With this technique, you isolate each sentence so you can focus on its syntax and structure, especially if you are having problems with fragments and run-on sentences.

Point and Read

Try following the words on the page with a pencil or the tip of your finger as you read them. By pointing and tracing, you can **see** your errors more clearly. This technique will help you quickly find small grammatical and typographical problems. Remember that successful proofreading requires acute skills in **looking**, because when we read we sometimes only recite the words from memory and not really pay attention to what’s on the page.

More Helpful Tips

- Use a spell checker and grammar checker, but do not depend on them.
- Read your work alongside a friend or family member.
- Double check small words: “Or”, “if, it”, and “is” are often interchanged
- Read slowly and carefully.
- Closely review the format of the paper: margins, font, header/footer, page numbers etc.
- Check your assignment instructions for any specific formatting requirements.

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