

Proofreading Tips

Definition: Proofreading is the very last step in the writing process. In the publishing world, proofreading takes place after a document, such as an advertisement or article, has been created and edited. The document goes to press, but before it is printed, “proofs” are created. The last check of the document before a full run is printed is therefore called “PROOFreading.”

At this point, you are sick of the paper because you have (ideally) been working on it for days if not weeks. But you need to visit it with fresh eyes one last time or two. Here are some ways to take a new perspective (literally) on your work:

1. Pay attention to MS Word’s spellchecker and grammar checker. Though it does not catch everything, it’s often very helpful.
2. Read the paper aloud or have a friend read it aloud to you.
3. Read or listen to the paper several times, each time focusing on one particular issue, such as spelling, subject-verb agreement, capitalization, punctuation, consistent formatting, etc.
4. Check for typos by reading the paper one paragraph at a time, one sentence at a time, one word at a time BACKWARDS.
5. Create a checklist based on your teacher’s assignment sheet, and check the paper to make sure you’ve met all requirements.
6. Take a break. Take a nap. Sleep on it. Time away from the project will help clear your head. In fact, that’s one of the reasons teachers encourage you to begin papers weeks ahead of time.

Small details to look for:

1. Make sure all quotation marks are curly or straight.
2. Check for font type and size consistency.
3. Check for coherence in title, section headers, sub-headers, etc.
4. Make sure page numbers are in order and table of contents or indexes are correct.
5. Look for transposed letters and numbers.

The Buddy System

Find a friend who is working on a writing project, too, and exchange papers. Help each other out by providing a fresh eye and a second look specifically to proofreading.

OR, visit the Writing Center in BH 206 during a scheduled appointment to work get help identifying the types of errors you make regularly. We won’t locate all your errors, but we’ll key you in to those you make often and show you several examples. We’ll also read the paper aloud so you can listen for errors. You can use our resource library or our computers to assist you even further!