



Proofreading Your Paper

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For more information on proofreading, see the Purdue OWL's other handouts on the subjects:

- Steps in Editing at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_stepedit.html
 - Editing and Proofreading Strategies for Revision at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_edit.html
 - Proofreading Strategies at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_edit.html
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Proofreading Your Work

It is always difficult to find errors in one's own work. The words and sentences appear correct on rereading because if the writer had known better, he or she would not have made the errors in the first place. But a careful rereading of a paper aloud before it is turned in helps considerably.

Perhaps a checklist of common errors will serve as a guide for you. Keep this list and a grammar book with you as you read your paper over, checking every sentence for these items.

Run-on Sentences and Sentence Fragments

Check each sentence to make sure it has a subject, a verb, and a complete thought.

Have you run two sentences together incorrectly without a period, conjunction or semicolon separating them?

Punctuation

Have you ended every sentence with a period, question mark, or exclamation point?

Are your thoughts within sentences broken up correctly by commas for easier understanding?

Have you broken up series with commas?

Have you used a period after abbreviations?

If you are in doubt about the proper punctuation of a sentence, have you asked or looked at our handouts on punctuation at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html#Punctuation>.

Quotation Marks

Did you remember to place exact quotes within quotation marks?

Did you place all periods and commas inside the quotation marks while placing semicolons and colons outside them?

Subject-Verb Agreements

Check every subject and verb to make sure that if you have used a singular subject, you have also used a singular verb.

Similarly, a plural subject needs a plural verb.

Sentence Length

Compute the average number of words per sentence. How close is that number compared to the average of 22?

Have you varied the length of sentences in each paragraph?

If your sentences are too long, break them into shorter units.

Sentences that are very short tend to produce a jerky style of writing.

Does each sentence follow clearly and logically from the one before it? Have you used some type of transitional device between each sentence?

Apostrophes

Have you used them correctly to indicate possession? If you're unsure, check a grammar book.

Tenses

Have you incorrectly jumped about in different tenses?

Have you used the correct form of the verb to express the tense you want?

Capitalization

Have you capitalized names of persons, cities, countries, streets, and titles?

Have you capitalized a quotation according to the original and according to the needs of your sentence?

Spelling

Check any word you have doubts about.

If you are unsure of the spelling of a certain word, look it up.

Be especially careful of the words listed as spelling nightmares: "ei" and "ie" words, words which add "-ing" and "ed," and words with one or more sets of double letters.

Paragraphing

Does each paragraph have a topic sentence which states the main idea?

Have you used examples and vivid specific details to describe your topic?

Have you used explanatory sentences to give your opinion or judgment on the topic?

Have you included sentences which pertain only to that idea?

Are transitions used between sentences and paragraphs?

Is there a concluding sentence?

Omissions

Have you left out any words in your sentences?

The following information must remain intact on every handout printed for distribution.

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