

Proofreading Strategies

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What is Proofreading?

Proofreading is the process of checking over your writing to catch and correct minor inconsistencies and errors. Proofreading generally focuses on spelling, grammar (run-ons, comma splices, punctuation, etc.), and formatting, and it should come near the very end of the writing process.

Getting Ready to Proofread

- Don't rush! Take a day or two away from your draft so you can come back to it with fresh eyes. It's a mistake to assume that good proofreading can be rushed or done at the last minute.
- Print out a hard copy of your paper. Our eyes are better at catching errors in print than on a screen.
- Make a list of common errors (like common words you mix up or grammar mistakes you often make). You can build this based on previous errors your instructors have found in your papers.

Strategies While Proofreading

- Read your paper out loud to help catch awkward phrasing, run-on sentences, typos, and more.
- Read the paper sentence-by-sentence, but in reverse: start with the final sentence and work backwards. This may help keep you from getting distracted by the big-picture argument.
- Follow each word with a pen/pencil as you read, or use a ruler to focus on only one sentence at a time.
- Circle every punctuation mark so you can check whether they're correct.
- Try changing the font, font size, or spacing - a "new look" often helps your brain catch more errors.
- Use the document Search feature (Ctrl+F or Command+F) to hunt for extra spaces and other errors. For example, if you often misspell a certain word or name, search the first few letters of that word to check every instance in your paper.

Use Spellcheck Wisely

Microsoft Word's *Spelling & Grammar Check* function and free apps like Grammarly can be useful first tools for catching minor errors, like typos, and you should *always* spellcheck a paper before submission. However, these electronic checkers are not infallible; they often do not catch certain types of mistakes. Do not rely on spellcheckers alone - use them alongside these strategies for more accurate results.

More Resources

[The Top Twenty Errors in Undergraduate Writing \(Stanford\)](#)

[Twelve Common Errors \(University of Wisconsin-Madison\)](#)

[A Writing Center Proofreading Checklist \(The Ohio State University\)](#)