



## **PROOFREADING TIPS**

Clear, concise, error-free writing is vital in all walks of life, whether you're a student, a professional, or a creative writer. It isn't always easy to edit your own work, though, so errors can slip in and lessen the impact of your writing. Proofreading is the final stage of the writing process when the paper is evaluated for mechanical correctness, such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, omitted words, repeated words and typographical errors. Proofreading should be done only after all of the other revisions and editing are completed. Since proofreading is such an important step in the writing process, it helps to know a few ways to improve your own proofreading skills. One or all of the following tips can help you catch mistakes before your document is submitted.

### **Step away from your work**

After spending a lot of time writing and re-reading the same text, it's easy for your brain to fill in missing words in a sentence or for your eyes to glaze over grammatical details. There's also the problem that you know what it is meant to say. Therefore, you will read it as you meant it, which may not necessarily be how someone else will interpret it. So it helps to set the work aside – for at least a day – and come to it when you are fresh. Try to read it with an unbiased eye and don't forget to check the titles.

### **Read the text out loud**

This strategy helps you to spot confusing points or jarring structure. It also helps you identify awkward or abrupt sentences, as well as sentences which are too long or 'paragraphs' which are really just sentences. It can help with the punctuation too. Remember to read what it says, not what you meant it to say.

### **Print out the document**

Getting your eyes away from a computer screen and onto a physical page can help you find errors that fell through the cracks. Many proofreaders prefer to work on hardcopy rather than on the screen, perhaps because the screen is so tiring on the eyes. Short documents work perfectly well on screen, but anything longer will probably benefit from printing it out.

### **Check everything**

Do you have calculations, or tables, or 'phone numbers in your copy? Check them. Don't assume that you have transcribed them correctly. Is that 'phone number or email address an old one? The best way to check 'phone numbers is

to actually ring them and the same follows for email addresses and URLs. Follow them: do they take you to the right place?

These are just a few ways to develop your own proofreading skills. You can try one approach or a combination of them to see what's most effective for you. Even if you are going to send your work to a copy editor or proofreader, it's still a good idea to have it as good as it can be before it leaves you. If you are working to a deadline, make sure that you build in enough time for properly proofing your copy yourself. If you intend to send it to an Editor, make sure that you have 'booked it in' long beforehand. It could be disastrous if you have allowed a set amount of time for this stage, only to find that s/he is on holiday, or working on something else that won't wait. If you book into their diary, it's a good discipline for meeting that deadline too.