

Proofreading Tips

Do It Last

Haven't finished your draft? Then you're not ready to proofread. Yes, you can always look over what you've written so far and make corrections as needed, but your final proofread won't come until you are done writing. Proofreading is the last thing you do.

Step Back

Don't proofread right after you finish writing. Come back to it later. Sleep on it. What was brilliant at 1:00 a.m. might not be so brilliant the next day.

Don't Trust Your Spellchecker

Computer spellcheckers can be really helpful, but they can also cause two problems: 1) missing an error and 2) making you think something is wrong when it's really right (and then you change it and make it wrong!). Sure, spellcheck your document, but don't assume that's all you need to do.

Work Fresh

Proofread when you're the most awake and alert. Tired eyes won't catch as much.

Turn It Off

Distracted proofreading is ineffective proofreading. Get alone, turn off the TV or the radio app, and put the phone in another room. Don't listen to words while you're working with words.

Touch It

Reading on a screen puts you at a distance from your words, and a screen can cause more eyestrain and reduce your effectiveness. Print out your words. Hold the paper in a comfortable light. Get out your pen: draw circles, arrows, underlines, stars, smileys, etc.

Focus on a Section

Give yourself just a part of the page to look at. Cover the rest with a ruler, piece of paper, etc.

Know Yourself

Check first for the errors you know you're more likely to make, or errors you have made in the past.

Look for Common Goofs

Some errors are really common, like unnecessary apostrophes, words that sound like other words (homophones), incorrect numbers, etc. Try pressing Ctrl + F to search the document for common problem words (like "its").

Pick an Error

Look for just one kind of error at a time, like missing commas or incomplete sentences.

Try It Backward

Break the normal flow of thought by reading the last sentence of your paper, then the one before it, and so on. If you're looking for spelling errors, read a sentence backward word by word.

Say It

Your sentences might look great, but how do they sound? Read out loud to test-drive your words.

Hear It

Feel weird reading your paper out loud? Get someone else to do it, or have the computer do it. You can use the Read Aloud feature in Word or the text-to-speech feature in Google Docs. Not sure how to turn these on? Just Google it.

Take the Opportunity

While you're proofreading for grammar and punctuation errors, you might notice something else that needs fixed, like a missing citation, incorrect piece of information, confusing sentence, or formatting error. If you see something else, fix it while you're at it.

Get Help

Your own words are the hardest to proofread. You know what they *should* say, so it's easy to miss what they actually *do* say. After you've done your best to proofread, find someone to read through your words and catch what you missed.

For more tips, consult the following:

<https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/writingprocess/proofreading>

<https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Proofreading.html>

<https://www.dailywritingtips.com/8-proofreading-tips-and-techniques/>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/top-proofreading-tips-1691277>