



PROOFREADING

Now you have finished [editing](#), proofreading should be the very last step of your revision process – what you do after you have finished all of the editing revision. To proofread, you focus on the detail that helps you make a good impression. This means you attend to formatting, spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Description	What to do...
1. For spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is my computer's language set to Australian, British or North American spelling? • Is my spelling consistent throughout the text? • Have you used an English dictionary? • Have you reviewed all the words the computer underlines in red? • Have you checked words like 'there' and 'their', 'to' and 'too', 'from or form'? (these are valid words; the computer spell checker does not recognise their inaccurate use) • Have you edited out any contractions? ('don't' should be 'do not'; 'it's' is 'it is') • When you want to use an acronym, have you first written the word/phrase in full? (ie. 'the World Health Organisation (WHO)') • Are numbers below 10 spelled out? (numbers 10 and above are written as figures)
2. For grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you speaking in an active voice? • Have you checked that you've used tense (eg. ~ed, ~ing) appropriately, accurately and consistently? • Have you checked that you've used singular and plural subjects appropriately, accurately and consistently? • Have you used articles appropriately, accurately and consistently? • Are pronouns used appropriately and accurately? • Have you used the singular verb with collective nouns? (ie. the <i>committee is</i>)
3. For punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you used the possessive apostrophe appropriately? (ie. showing ownership: the client's need/clients' needs) • Have you used the apostrophe to make a contraction? (ie. missing letters: won't) *contractions are not appropriate in academic writing unless present in a quote • Have you used quotation marks where needed? • Have you used commas, periods, semi-colons and colons purposefully appropriately and correctly? • Have you used the hyphen to show two or more words or two parts of one word belong together? Have I used the hyphen consistently?
4. For vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know the precise meaning of the word you are using? (use an English dictionary. This is especially important if English is not your first language because words in one language may not have an exact equivalent in another language). • Have you used a thesaurus to vary your vocabulary? • Are you using discipline-specific vocabulary accurately? • Are you using gender-neutral and non-discriminatory language accurately and appropriately? • Have you misused any words (affect/effect; then/than, etc)? • Is your writing too 'wordy'? (remember, you are writing to <i>express</i>, not <i>impress</i>; fewer and shorter words can have a strong impact) • Have you properly introduced quotations?
5. For sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your sentences make sense? • Are your sentences complete? (you are looking for errors in agreement between subject and verb, and between pronouns and the words or phrases they are

	<p>representing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your sentences too long? • Have you used a variety of sentence types? (simple, complex and compound) • Have you opened your sentence with the most important information? • Have you reviewed all the sentences or parts of sentences the computer has underlined in green? (the computer will highlight run-on sentences, sentence fragments)
6. For whole text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you written so that the reader can not only understand your message but your intent or have you assumed the reader will know what you mean? • Have you met the word count? • Is the text formatted according to college/school guidelines (check against your subject outline) • Is your text logically organised? • Are your paragraphs too long? • Have you eliminated any repeated information? • Have all tables and figures been numbered, labeled, described and attributed correctly? • Have you used too many quotations?

Useful tips for both editing and proofreading

- **Make time to revise** – never submit work that has not been edited and proofread. You should aim to spend the last few days before submission editing and proofreading your work, so build this time into your assignment planning (ie. if a 2,500 word assignment is due week 6 and you were going to begin in week 3, then you will now begin in week 2)
- **Create distance between you and the text** – when you have ‘finished’ your final draft, try to put your work aside for a while so that when you begin to edit or proofread, you are reading it with ‘fresh’ eyes (if you can’t afford to wait a day or two, a couple of hours may be enough)
- **Edit and proofread multiple times in manageable chunks of time** – It’s always best to edit when you’re alert, and you need to set aside time (1/2 hr or 1hr at a time) at different times over the last few days before submission. Don’t edit and proofread for all types of mistakes at once. During each read-through, edit or proofread for different aspects, like meaning, clarity, errors in punctuation and grammar, consistent spelling, formatting styles, paragraph lengths and other issues
- **Read your text a different way** – try reading your document backwards, in segments, so aspects other than meaning – like typos and spacing – stand out for you more; read aloud or create a [reverse outline](#) to check for logical development of the text
- **Read each sentence separately and carefully** - read line by line to ensure it makes sense
- **If you don’t have much time to revise, prioritise!** – at the very least edit for whole text level organisation and ensure your sentences make sense
- **Note your most common errors so you can pick them up quickly the next time**

Useful links:

James Cook University Learning Centre

[James Cook University LibGuides](#)

Other links:

[Monash University](#)

[Purdue OWL](#)

[Flinders University](#)

References

The Writing Center. (2014). Editing and proofreading. Retrieved from <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/editing-and-proofreading/>

The Writing Center. (2014). Reverse outline. Retrieved from <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/reverse-outline/>

