

PROOFREADING STRATEGIES

Before proofreading...

- Work from a printed copy, not digital.
- Enlarge font by 2pts.
- Switch between serif and sans serif fonts, (for example, *Sorry* > *Sorry*)
- Change the colour of text (to dark blue or green, dark orange)
- Read one sentence at the time. Use a sheet of paper to cover the rest of the text

Sentence-Level Proofreading

- Find the “this” and “its”

Tip #1: Check for **wrong pronoun reference**. Look for “it” or “they” or “this” or “these” Then, search for the noun that these pronoun replaces. You can try to draw an arrow from the pronoun to the antecedent (i.e., the specific noun this word is referring to). If there are two nouns present, make sure the following sentence clarifies to which “it” refers.

- Find the “there” and “their”

Tip #2: Many spelling errors involve homophones (words that are pronounced the same but spelled differently. For example, there/their, soul/sole, advice/advise, alter/altar)

- Find the “can’t” and “don’t”

Tip #3: Look out for **contractions**

Control-F the apostrophe ’t and apostrophe ’re, and formalise the contractions accordingly. Also, pay attention to words ending with “s.”

- Check the “;” and “:”

Tip #4: Make sure you have a **punctuation** every line, if not two. Be wary of too many dependent clauses, and if you run out of breath when you read aloud. Circle or highlight every punctuation mark in your paper. Pay attention to each mark you used and question its purpose in the sentences. This is a helpful strategy if you tend to mis-/overuse a punctuation mark, such as comma or semi-colon.

- Check the “...” and (...)

Tip #5: Make sure that **citation** is consistent and of academic style. That every quoted text is followed up with a parenthetical reference that is suited to your citation style. If a quotation runs on for three lines, use block quotations.

- Check the *italics*, CaPitaLisaTion, underlines, and **bold**

Tip #6: Make sure **titles** and subheadings are properly formatted. Book titles should be in italics, articles are in double quotations. If you have subtitles, decide if they should be italicised or bolded.

Structure-Level Proofreading

- Look out for chunky paragraphs, especially if sporadic rather than consistent

Tip #7: Make sure there are no glaringly oversized or undersized **paragraphs**, unless they are transitions or main discussion body paragraphs.

- Check your use of subtitles, headings

Tip #8: Ensure that **subtitles and chapter headings** are consistent, in terms of grammatical construction and content. Looking at the titles and sub-titles alone, do they communicate the general narrative of your chapter/capstone?

- Ensure parts of essay are identifiable

Tip #9: Check if the essay’s **organising principle** is sound—text progresses linearly, if not in an acceptable manner, for instance, introduction, review, body, conclusion.

CHECKLIST

Sentence

- Are most sentences in the active voice?
- Do most sentences begin with the subject?
- Does sufficient sentence variety exist?
- Do I refer to subjects themselves instead of overusing pronouns such as 'it' or 'they'?
- Am I using redundancies ('absolutely useful', 'completely surrounded', 'serious crisis')?
- Am I using tautologies (eg. 'A comparative study covering both aspects')?
- Am I using slang and informal terms?
- Have I misused any of commonly mixed homophone such as to/too/two, steel/stale?

Structure

- Have I structured my text in the accepted manner?
I.e., Front matter, abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, procedure, results, discussion, conclusion, recommendations, appendices, references
- Are paragraphs sequenced logically?
- Does each paragraph contain a topic sentence?
- Are paragraphs of appropriate length?
- Are titles used where necessary?

Tables, graphs and illustrations

- Are tables, graphs, and illustrations positioned properly
- Are tables, graphs, and illustrations referred to directly?
- Are tables, graphs, and illustrations titled and labelled correctly?
- Are tables, graphs, and illustrations listed in the List of Tables or Illustrations?

Citations

- Do all text in quotation end with a parenthetical reference?
- Do paragraphs have at least one citation? For paragraphs without, are the ideas yours?
- Have I formatted my paper according to the particular style guidelines?
- Did I indent (5 spaces) the first sentence of each paragraph?
 - Are block quotes (more than 3 lines) indented, 1 inch from the left margin?
- Are all sources cited in the paper included on the Works Cited page?
- Are all the sources cited on the Works Cited page used in the paper?

[My own lapses]

Look for personal patterns of error. You will make mistakes that are typical of your writing. As you proofread, be attentive to your blind spots and lapses. If you forget commas, check for commas. If you work on wordiness, look for this. Take inventory of your favourite mistakes and look out for them.