Proofreading Strategies

Proofreading is often one of the final steps when polishing a document or completing an assignment prior to submitting it. Proofreading involves making intentional choices around language, formatting, and presentation as well as identifying any unintentional errors. Proofreading can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially if you're not sure what strategies to use. Setting goals for proof-reading and then choosing specific strategies for proofreading can help make the process more manageable.

Goal-Setting

Set Your Goal! Select the areas you hope to work on when proofreading. If you have multiple goals, prioritize them and focus on one goal at a time. This can make the proofreading process more manageable and effective.

What areas of your paper do you hope to focus on when proofreading?

☐ Grammar

☐ Word Choice

☐ Punctuation

☐ In-text & works-cited citations

☐ Formatting

☐ Other:_____

Proofreading Strategies

Try Out Some Proofreading Strategies! Different strategies work well for different writers and for different documents. Consider identifying one or two strategies from this list to try! As you use a strategy, try to be aware of how your engagement with your text varies. This can help you identify what works or doesn't work well for you in identifying areas for revision.

1. Did you just finish drafting or revision? Take a break!

No, not a procrastination break. Take a break with the intention of resting. Maybe this still means picking up your phone or listening to music, but what matters is that you give yourself–and your brain–a chance to rest before starting the next step in your writing process. This also gives you the chance to review your writing with a fresh perspective when you return.

2. Print your document and read it!

Reading a printed document can change how you focus on the text or how you engage with the text. At times an error you might miss when reading on your computer may be more apparent if you are reading a printed version and writing on your draft.

Oregon State University

Proofreading Strategies

3. Change the font of your document!

Consider changing the font style in some ways: font face, color, size, etc. Sometimes changing the font in your document can help you view the document from a new perspective. Rather than looking at the familiar text you've been looking at during the longer drafting process, you may find the text less familiar and engage in a new way.
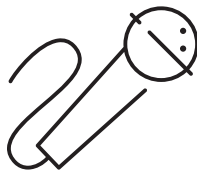
4. Read your draft aloud!

Read your writing aloud, have a Writing Center consultant or writing partner read aloud, or have an AI do it. The last option can be especially helpful for identifying typos because the AI will at times read incorrect spellings. When reading aloud, look for moments when you pause. The pause may indicate a potential error or a moment where attention to language could be clarified.

Free AI readers can be found on:

- *Word* (a function called "Read Aloud")
- *Natural Readers* (an online webpage)
- And *Google Translate* (click the speaker symbol)
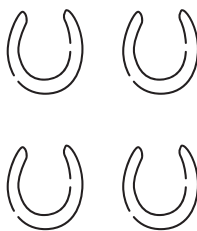
5. Look for repetition!

Repetition can often be a sign of where you could work on concision, sentence variety, or word choice. If you are familiar with your own habits in writing, or if you read through and make a list of frequently used words, you can use the search function to identify where and how often you use repeated words/phrases. This can help you identify potential language to revise.
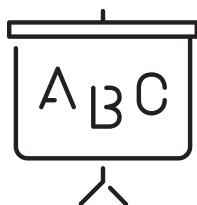
## 6. Use spell & grammar check tools or software!

Turn on the spell and grammar check tools in your word processor or use another resource like an external grammar check program. As you review each moment the program identifies, don't assume the check is always correct. Take time to make intentional decisions about what to revise.

Oregon State University

Proofreading Strategies
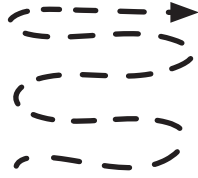
7. Read your document backwards, sentence by sentence!

This strategy allows you to focus on single sentences at a time. It removes the flow of the document, so you may notice small errors that you might miss when in the flow of reading from start to finish.
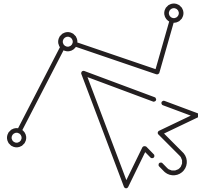
8. Use a ruler, paper, or other tool to isolate individual sentences as you read!

Similar to reading the document backwards, this strategy can help you focus on single sentences vs. the flow of a document, making it more likely to identify errors.
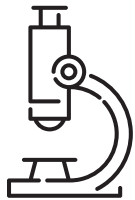
9. Check each citation individually!

Each citation format is different. Have your style guide at hand for reference. When checking, be sure that you have elements of the citation correct (e.g., capitalization, spelling of names, punctuation), and then check that any citation in-text is in the works cited page as well.
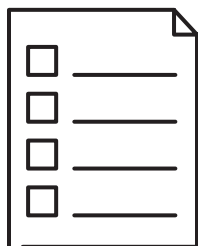
10. Make a checklist of formatting requirements or goals for your document!

If your have an assignment, a list may already be included. If formatting is open-ended, make a list of your own guidelines for formatting, then review each area to be sure they're correct. For example, look at margins, headings, colors, consistency in font, etc.

Sources:
BetterBooks. (2021). How To Write Paragraphs. Tumblr. Retrieved July 15, 2022, from https://betterbooks.tumblr.com/post/641952568581505024/how-to-write-paragraphs
University of Minnesota. (n.d.). Teaching with effective models of writing. Retrieved July 15, 2022, from https://wac.umn.edu/tww-program/teaching-resources/teaching-with-effective-models-of-writing

Brought to you by the
Writing Center
writingcenter.oregonstate.edu

Oregon State University