

MSJC LRC Guide to Proofreading

- ✓ **Read a printed copy of your work.** Proofreading can be done more precisely when reading text typed on paper rather than viewed on a computer screen. It allows you to mark up the copy with proofreading symbols that you can use to note errors and go back and correct later. But do not be fooled by a nicely printed paragraph; it can be filled with errors.
- ✓ **Read the paper out loud or have someone read it to you.** Whenever you or the reader stumbles while reading the text might indicate a problem with an awkwardly constructed sentence, or you might hear a sentence that never seems to end. You might find wrong or misplaced words, or something that just does not make sense.
- ✓ **Read the paper backwards, word for word, end to beginning.** Reading your paper out of context helps to isolate each word. Any word that you suspect may be misspelled should be checked and corrected as necessary. You can also read the paper backwards one sentence at a time, singling out every sentence to help you focus on the construction and correctness of each.

Some Errors to Watch Out For

- Sentences:**
- ✓ Fragments – Does each sentence begin with a capital letter, end with the appropriate punctuation mark, and express and complete thought?
 - ✓ Run-on Sentences – Are there any comma splices or fused sentences?
 - ✓ Sentence Sprawl – Is there too much information given in one very long, extended sentence?
- Grammar:**
- ✓ Pronoun Agreement - Does every pronoun agree in number with the word or words it replaces?
 - ✓ Subjects & Verbs – Does every verb agree with its subject in number?
Are verb tenses consistent?
 - ✓ Punctuation – Are the conventions of punctuations utilized?

(More on Back)

- Mechanics:** ✓ Are the rules for correctly using capitalization, apostrophes, and quotation marks being followed?
✓ Are all the words spelled correctly?
- Typographical Errors (Typos):** ✓ Are obvious typing errors avoided, including typing the same word twice, inverting words, or running words together?

A Final Word

All of the skills mentioned here take time and practice to master – more time than a 15 to 30 minute tutoring session at the Writing Center can provide. The correct execution of punctuation, for example, takes a serious, sustained effort on the writer’s part. The student writer must understand that a tutor simply making corrections to a text does not help him or her become an independent writer, and assisting a student to become an independent writer is the primary goal of the Writing Center. A writer must focus on what steps must be taken to reach this independence. Developing good proofreading skills is just one of those important steps.

Proofreading Resources

- ✓ *The UNC Writing Center: Editing and Proofreading* – A resource that shares strategies to successful proofreading and editing.
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/editing-and-proofreading/>
- ✓ *The Teaching Resources Center Writing Project* – A good source for information regarding any part of the writing process, including paragraphs and essays.
<http://cai.ucdavis.edu/trc/trcgrid.html>
- ✓ *Big Dog: A Bare Bones Guide to English* – Simple explanations of English grammar. The site includes exercises.
<http://www.aliscot.com/bigdog/>
- ✓ *Grammar Bytes!* – Practice tests and a daily grammar workout.
<http://chompchomp.com/>