

Proofreading and Revising Techniques

- Why should writers proofread?

I had a lot of trouble reading your essay. You make good points, but your writing has too many sloppy errors.

Unfortunately, your essay earned a C even though you are capable of A work.



Sorry! I know I should have proofread my work before I handed it in. To be honest, I waited until the last minute. I was hoping you wouldn't notice my mistakes.

Oh, no! I was hoping for an A. I worked so hard.

Your reader may focus on your mistakes and may ignore your overall point.



Subject-verb agreement

Wrong verb

Capitalization error

Missing word

Parallel structure

Article

Pronoun Case

Fragment

Spelling errors

Writing is a form of
communication.



Don't communicate that you are a sloppy
writer!

Don't let your reader become distracted by
your careless errors.

Proofread with an open mind.

- Be willing to make changes.
- Be willing to put in the time and effort.
- Leave yourself ample time to examine your writing.
- Keep your reader in mind at all times.



Strategies for Proofreading

Use an Essay Evaluation Checklist.

- Introduction
- Body Paragraphs
- Conclusion
- Mechanics

- http://homepage.smc.edu/chenev_joyce/essay_evaluation_form.htm
- To find other essay evaluation checklists, do an Internet search.
- In Google, type in “essay evaluation checklist.”

Study your instructor's comments on previous papers to help you become aware of your weaknesses.

Pat Student
March 24, 2004
English 1
Prof. I. M. Watching

My Essay

In one class, three students submitted their essays all on the same topic. One student earns an A, the other two failed. When the professor returned the essays, he explained a basic fact of life. Anyone who proofread are likely to do well. Every essay should be proofread several time.

Verb Tense

CS

SV Ag

SP

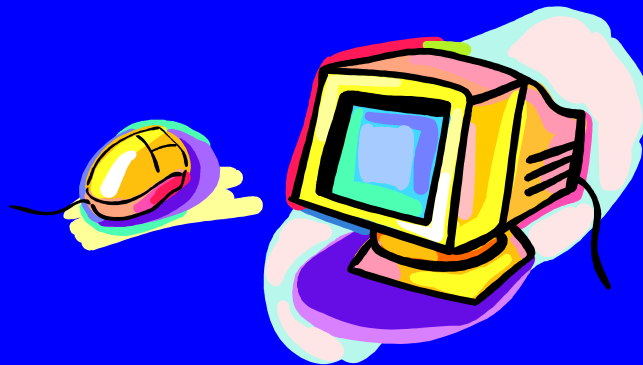
WF

Slowly read your essay aloud.

- Hearing your written words may help you “hear” errors.
- Prepare to read your writing several times and at different times.
- To make yourself attentive to your written work, involve your senses of touch, sound, and sight.
- Run your finger along the text as you read it.
- Read only the words on the page.
- Listen to what you read, especially when you add words that are not on the page.

Use an electronic grammar and spell check.

- While your computer's grammar checker may not catch every error, it is an effective, time-saving beginning. A click of the mouse can help you begin to find errors.



Try reading your essay backwards.

- If you tend to skim rather than read, this method may help you to concentrate on every word.
- Reading from the right to left will make you look at each word since you won't be focusing on the ideas.

Try reading the following passage from right to left.

As long as they are not actually harming other,
people should allowed to say what he want. To think
what they want, and does what they wants.

Which errors can you find?

Listen to someone else's reading of your essay.

Now that I've heard you read my essay, I hear many of my mistakes.

I'm sorry to say so, but those mistakes do stand out.



Read someone else's essay.

- We tend to see other people's mistakes more easily than we see our own. By looking for errors in another person's writing, you can train yourself to look for errors in your own essay.
- A word of advice: Be gentle!



When you read advertisements, billboards,
magazines or newspapers, look for grammatical
errors.

“Between President Bush and he...?”
It should be “Between President Bush and him.



Here are some examples from publications:

- Hard Work Has It's Rewards.
- Untied Methodist Church.
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our congregation.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles, and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

Proofread in stages.

- 1. Examine the content.
- 2. Examine the organization of ideas.
- 3. Examine the mechanics.

Examine the content of the essay, piece by piece.

- Examine the introduction.
- Examine each body paragraph.
- Examine the conclusion.
- In this stage, you are checking the ideas of the essay.



Introductory Paragraph

- Is there a catchy opening to grab the reader's attention?
- Does this opening fit the mood of the thesis and the rest of the essay?
- Have you made a smooth transition between the first line(s) and the thesis statement?

Thesis Statement

- Is there a thesis statement at the end of the introductory paragraph?
- Does the thesis address the assignment?
- Is the thesis stated in an opinion form?
- Does the thesis reflect the content of the body?

The Body Paragraphs

- Does each body paragraph contain a leading topic sentence?
- Do the sentences in the body develop the opening sentence?
- Does each paragraph cover one main point?
Are they in logical order?
- Does each paragraph have a smooth ending?

Concluding Paragraph

- Have you reworded the thesis statement?
- Have you drawn a conclusion from the separate body paragraphs?
- Have you made an overall statement concerning the points that you discussed separately in the body paragraphs?
- Have you brought up a new idea? If so, delete it. Do not bring up new information in the closing.
- Is there a feeling of closure in the last line?

Examine the mechanics.



Common Errors:

- Subject-Verb Agreement
- Verb Tense
- Verb Form
- Pronoun Case
- Pronoun Reference
- Pronoun Point of View
- Misused or omitted articles
- Misused or omitted prepositions

More Common Errors

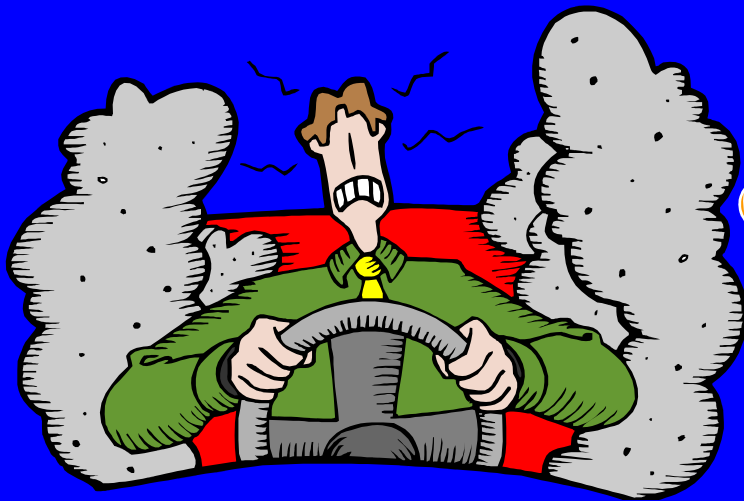
- Sentence structure (fragments, run-ons, and comma splices)
- Misspellings
- Missing words
- Missing endings on words
- Punctuation
- Parallel structure

Review of Proofreading Techniques

- 1. Use an essay evaluation checklist.
- 2. Know your writing weaknesses and look especially carefully for them.
- 3. While running your finger along the text, slowly read aloud every word and listen to what you are reading.
- 4. Use an electronic grammar and spell checker.
- 5. Listen to someone else's reading of your essay.
- 6. Sharpen your proofreading skills by critically examining on other people's writing as well as billboards, newspapers, signs, and newsletters.

Part Two

- A study of the common grammatical errors.



I wish I remembered
everything I learned in
my English classes.
Life would be so much
easier!

Subject-Verb Agreement

- Do your subjects agree with your verbs?
- Know the rule of subject-verb agreement:
- Singular subjects require singular verbs, and plural subjects require plural verbs.
- Many attempts to persuade the reader (has, have) been attempted.

Are you using the appropriate forms of your verbs?

- If you are discussing an event that has happened, are you using the past tense?
- Are you being consistent in using the same verb tense? If you begin in one tense, generally you should continue in the same tense.

Check your sentence structure.

- Look for:
- Fragments—incomplete thoughts.
- Comma splices—two sentences separated by only a comma.
- Run-ons—two sentences running into each other with no separation.

Look for fragments.

- Fragments are incomplete thoughts that should not be used in academic writing.
- Examples:
 - The dentist was filling my cavity. Which was down to the roots. Ouch!
 - Because the dog was out in the rain. She is soaking wet.

To repair a fragment,

- Consider combining the two ideas.
- He was short. And chubby.
- He was short and chubby.
- The weekend passed quickly. Even though we did little.
- The weekend passed quickly even though we did little.

To repair a fragment,

- Consider deleting words:
- Since the students were late for class. The instructor was upset.
- The students were late for class; the instructor was upset.

Look for comma splices.

- Look for comma splices—two sentences separated by only a comma.
- He was late, he had to wait for the next bus.

To repair a comma splice or run-on, try one of the following:

- Use a semi-colon between the two thoughts.
- Use a period and a capital letter for the first word of the second sentence.
- Insert a coordinating conjunction along with a comma.
- Insert a subordinating conjunction to connect the two ideas.

You can see that having a working knowledge of the basic rules of usage is a must for any effective writer. You already know a lot. You may need to remind yourself what you already know.

Places to refresh your memory:

- Independently study your grammar handbook.
- Study the many web sites with grammar and writing advice.
- Enroll in a grammar class.
- Pay attention to what you are studying in your current English class. Do all the assigned work plus more in the classes you are currently taking.
- Visit the English/Humanities Tutoring Center in Drescher Hall Room 313.

The last bit of advice:

Aggressively apply what you know about the rules of usage. Always read, read, read carefully and slowly through your writing.

As the athletic shoe and apparel company Nike advertises, “DO IT.”