

# Proofreading Strategies

The last thing you do when writing an essay is make sure the writing is clear and readable. This step of the writing process is important because grammar and style can affect your credibility as a writer.



**Proofreading** involves carefully rereading your essay to correct grammar, punctuation, typos, and sentence structure.

## Strategies for Proofreading

- ✓ *Print out a hard copy of your essay.*
  - Mistakes are much easier to find on a piece of paper than on a computer screen, and you can physically mark them with a pen as you go.
- ✓ *Read out loud.*
  - Listen to how the writing sounds as you read. Sometimes it's easier to *hear* awkward or incomplete sentences than it is to *see* them.
- ✓ *Read one sentence at a time.*
  - Use a sheet of paper to cover all of the text except for the first sentence so that you can focus only on that small piece of writing. Then continue with each subsequent sentence.
- ✓ *Read backwards.*
  - Start by reading the last sentence first, then the second to last, etc. Taking each sentence out of context forces you to focus on the text, not the ideas, and helps you catch errors like sentence fragments.
- ✓ *Look for personal weaknesses.*
  - All writers have weaknesses, whether it's forgetting commas or imprecise word choice. Make a list of your trouble spots and keep it handy so that you know what to look for. It's much easier to find errors when you're looking for one specific issue at a time.

**Pro-tip:** Leave plenty of time between writing and proofreading. If you let the essay sit for 24 hours, you'll come back to it with fresh eyes. If you can't wait that long, grab a snack and give yourself 20 minutes before returning to the work.

## Know Your Resources

- Writing handbook
- Purdue Owl
- Dictionary
- Thesaurus
- Citation guide
- Librarian
- Writing center tutor

