

SKILLS FOR LEARNING

GUIDE TO PROOFREADING

WHAT IS PROOFREADING?

Proofreading involves checking the content and appearance of your written work: looking for errors in typing, spelling and grammar, and ensuring that it is presented in a style that meets the requirements of a module or course. Proofreading is a skill that requires time, but the more you practice, the quicker and easier it will become to spot any corrections that need to be made.

WHY IS PROOFREADING IMPORTANT?

Proofreading is an essential final stage of the assignment writing process which should not be overlooked, as a poorly presented piece of work can lose marks. After the effort of finding information and writing the assignment, don't lose marks by submitting a work spoiled by spelling and grammatical errors, or that does not adhere to your module's requirements. A well-presented essay indicates to your tutor that you care about your work.

AREAS TO CHECK:

Proofreading can be time-consuming and it is easy to underestimate the time required. It is a good idea to allow time for proofreading in your assignment plan. It is especially important that you follow any module requirements regarding referencing, line spacing, paragraph indentation, and margins, and that these are observed consistently and continuously.

CHECKLIST:

| Grammar | | check |
|----------|---|-------|
| Spelling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't rely on the spellchecker in Word - this won't pick up "typos" such as from/form or been/bean. Use an online dictionary to check spellings - don't guess at a spelling. | |
| Tenses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the subject match the verb? Are tenses used consistently within sentences? | |
| Language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have capitals been used where necessary? - e.g. for personal names, organisations, the start of a sentence. Have some words been used frequently within a paragraph or an essay? - if so, search for synonyms for alternative words to use. Is the language suitable for an academic essay? | |

| Referencing | | |
|----------------|--|--|
| Correct style | Are you using the correct style? Check your assignment guidelines for which style you should use. | |
| Consistent | Is the referencing consistent? | |
| Quotations | Have quotations been fully referenced? i.e. have you included quotation marks and page numbers if appropriate? | |
| Bibliography | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you included all the items you have cited in your text? • Are the references complete? | |
| Presentation | | |
| Line spacing | Does the assignment require particular line spacing? | |
| Margins | Are there any requirements regarding margins? | |
| Font size/type | Do you need to use a particular font size or type? | |
| Typing errors | Have all corrections been made in the final version? | |

TEN TIPS FOR BETTER PROOFREADING:

1. **Print work** - It is easier to read a paper copy than read on screen and check for errors
2. **Recurring errors** - If you are aware that the same errors recur within an assignment, create a list of these and make a conscious effort to look out for them.
3. **Read aloud** - This will highlight sentence structure and increase your awareness of the flow of the essay, and of any sentences that are too long or too short. It will also give you an idea of whether a sentence makes sense and if there is the right amount of punctuation.
4. **Be careful when cutting and pasting** - If you decide to move things around, don't forget to re-check the whole sentence to make sure that all the tenses, genders, and plurals agree.
5. **Check that all corrections** – Check that all changes have been made in the new version of the assignment.
6. **Ask someone to read your work** - They will be seeing your work for the first time and will be more likely to pick up any errors.
7. **Use lecturer feedback** – This will help you to identify areas for improvement.
8. **Don't proofread when tired** – You are more likely to hurry and overlook errors.
9. **Proofread separately** - For grammar, referencing, and presentation.
10. **Read one line at a time** – This will help your concentration. Cover up any sentences below the one you are reading.

HELP AND ADVICE

The Skills Development Team will not be able to proofread your essay but can provide guidance on proofreading. For more details about the type of help that is available please refer to the Skills for Learning website at <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/skills>.

FURTHER READING

Books offering advice on proofreading, grammar and essay writing skills are available in the Study Skills collections in the Learning Centres. Several titles are also available online as electronic books.



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