

Proofreading & Editing

Proofreading is the process of carefully reading a written piece in order to identify errors related to grammar, spelling, and punctuation. When you make changes to the piece, you are editing.

Q: When should I proofread my paper?

A: Proofreading and editing is the final stage in the writing process.

Do not attempt to proofread while you are drafting your paper. Instead, let your ideas flow and proofread later. Worrying about how a word is spelled or where a comma should be placed may interfere with your thought process.

Once you have written at least one draft and revised it for content, set your paper aside for a while (preferably a day or two) before your proofread. With a fresh eye and a clear mind, you are more likely to notice errors.

Q: How should I proofread?

A: The most effective strategy is to read your writing aloud, sentence by sentence, very slowly. By reading aloud, you will hear mistakes that your eyes might miss. Also, when you concentrate on each sentence, you can be sure that the words you typed are actually the words you meant to write.

Be prepared to proofread your writing several times. This final step of the writing process is incredibly important, so don't rush it.



Q: What types of errors should I look for?

A: Each writer faces their own unique set of challenges, but the most common errors are listed below and on the following page.

Misspelled words – Be sure to check the spelling of difficult words using the spelling feature of your writing application or an online dictionary. However, don't rely on the computer to catch all of your mistakes. Homophones (such as *their*, *there*, and *they're*) are words that have the same pronunciation, but very different meanings.

The Writing Center

Trident Technical College Thornley Campus
Building 510/ Room 137

writingcenter@tridenttech.edu
574-6623

Proofreading & Editing

Omitted or Repeated words – As you read aloud, point to each word on your paper or screen. You will find quickly if you have skipped a necessary word. If you notice that you have used the same word in two or more sentences within the same paragraph, use the thesaurus feature in your writing application or an online thesaurus to find a possible replacement.

Sentence Fragments – Each sentence must include a subject and a verb. If one of those pieces is missing, you have written a fragment. Add the missing piece.

Pay special attention to sentences that begin with subordinating conjunctions (words such as when, while, where, as, since, if, although, because). These words are often used to begin subordinate clauses, which cannot stand alone.

Example:

Sheila runs daily. Because she is preparing for a marathon. [Incorrect]

Sheila runs daily is an independent clause that can stand alone. It expresses a complete thought and includes a subject and verb.

Because she is preparing for a marathon is a subordinate clause and cannot stand alone. Combine it with the independent clause for a complex sentence.

Sheila runs daily, because she is preparing for a marathon. [Correct]

Comma Errors – Be sure to follow some of the basic comma rules.

Include commas between words in a series.

Ex: For dinner I ate a turkey sandwich, chips, and a cookie.

Use a comma in a compound sentence before the coordinating conjunction.

Ex: I ate apples, but he ate grapes.

Use a comma in a complex sentence with a subordinate clause.

Ex: When Queen Elizabeth began her reign, Winston Churchill was Prime Minister.

The Writing Center