Tips for Proofreading Your Own Writing
TCC Southeast Campus Writing Center

Get a Fresh Perspective

- Take a break (as little as 5 minutes) between writing and proofreading.
- Ask someone to read the paper to you, or read the paper to someone else.
- Read the paper into a tape recorder; play back the tape while you follow along.
- Listen for:
  1. Places where what is read differs from what is written,
  2. Places where the reader stumbles for any reason, and
  3. Places where the listener gets distracted, confused, or bored.

Slow Down

- Cover the writing with a ruler or piece of paper so you can see only one line of text at a time.
- Read backward, sentence by sentence (for unclear sentence structure, redundancy).
- Read backward, word by word (for typos and spelling mistakes).
- Circle verbs (to locate passive voice, strong verbs, tense shifts).
- Circle prepositional phrases (to locate wordiness).
- Point at punctuation marks as you name each piece of a citation (for proper citation format; for example, “Last name comma year. Date colon page numbers.”)

Use a Computer

- Print a draft designed especially for proofreading.
- Doublespace. Make each sentence start on a new line (to locate fragments).
- Use 14-point or larger type (for apostrophe and comma problems).
- Use spell-check and grammar-check software. These programs are hardly foolproof, but when interpreted with a tutor, they can be helpful.

Material adapted from A Tutor’s Guide: Helping Writers One to One. Ben Rafoth, ed.
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