PROOFREADING

The Center

Are you guilty of the ol' print and run? When you write, always leave time to proofread! Once you have a system it doesn’t take as long as you think. Using this handout can help you with some common proofreading issues.

General Proofreading Advice

1) Focus: Proofread your entire paper for ONE issue at a time.
2) Have a strategy: Learn how to find & fix the error.
3) Be consistent: Do the same thing each time you proofread.

Thesis Statements

There are lots of paper types (the fancy teacher term for this is genre). Your thesis statement needs to use certain language to show the paper type. The following example thesis is from an argumentative paper: “Citizen Kane is the finest film ever made by an American director because it revolutionizes the way we see the world” (Everything’s an Argument, 297). Now ask yourself: Is your thesis statement clear? Will your audience understand the focus and purpose of your paper (like in the argumentative paper above)?

Comma Usage

Most writers have problems with commas. Here are six basic rules of when to use commas:

- Before FANBOYS (Anyone know what a coordinating conjunction is? No? Well, let me drop some knowledge on you. FANBOYS is: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet & So).
- After introductory phrases and clauses (Ex: After I went to the gym, I ate Taco Bell.)
- To separate items in a series (Ex: I took my pencil, paper, and Red Bull to class.)
- To set off unnecessary info from the rest of your sentence (Ex: Gabby, whose friends call her G, loves the Beastie Boys!) See how I can take out the info inside the commas and the sentence still makes sense!
- Between places and years (Ex: I was born in Moline, Illinois, on April 14, 1973). Yep, Gabby is old.
- To set off introductory transitions (Ex: Finally, they stopped talking about commas.)

As you proofread, pause in sentences with commas and check them against these six rules.

Fragments & Run-Ons
Fragments and run-ons are fancy teacher terms for sentences missing some of their parts OR without correct punctuation. Here are the five most common types of fragments:

- A fragment without a subject or a verb:
  Incorrect: To see the basketball playoff game after work. [Where are the subject and verb?]
  Correction: Jared went to see the basketball playoff game after work. [Jared is happy because he got to see his game.]

- A fragment containing “who,” “which,” or “that”:
  Incorrect: The tutors who worked. [What about the tutors who worked?]
  Correction: The tutors who worked on the Proofreading Workshop did an awesome job!

- A dependent-marker fragment: because, until, when, while:
  Incorrect: Because I went to the Writing Center. [What happened because you went?]
  Correction: Because I went to the Writing Center, I wrote a fantastic paper.

- An added-detail fragment: for example, such as, like:
  Incorrect: Such as caffeine. [What about caffeine?]
  Correction: Energy drinks contain essential nutrition for students, such as caffeine.
  [Ok, do you really think we’d call caffeine a nutrient? Yes! The WC tutors strongly endorse Mountain Dew.]

- A prepositional-phrase fragment: in, about, over, of
  Incorrect: In the morning. [What about the morning?]
  Correction: In the morning, Jared likes to break dance in the Writing Center.

Here is a run-on and correction!
- Incorrect: Mr. Landin is our teacher he is the super master teacher of the universe!
- Correction: Mr. Landin is our teacher. He is the super master teacher of the universe!

If you have problems with fragments you may also have problems with run-ons; they are related issues! When you proofread, keep this list handy. Check each sentence to make sure it has a subject, verb, and preposition, and is correctly punctuated.

**Subject-Verb Agreement**

The subjects of your sentences should agree in number with your verbs. Have you heard of the Rule of S? No? Well, here is a rule that should help. It is called the Rule of S:

- If your subject has an S your verb will NOT! If your verb has an S your subject will NOT!
  Incorrect: The south campus tutors works at the best Writing Center.
  Correction after applying the Rule of S: The south campus tutors WORK at the best Writing Center.
When you proofread, check to see that your subjects agree in number with your verbs. Do this by identifying your subjects – are they singular or plural? Once you know this you can make sure to choose a verb that agrees!

**Other Proofreading Issues**

These are some other common proofreading issues. You can find more help for all of these via our Writing Center handouts. Have you:

- Avoided using YOU? (Be serious. “You” is 2nd person & most academic writing avoids it!)
- Used apostrophes correctly? (Ex: Gabby’s sarcasm OR Jared’s handout on proofreading)
- Checked for capitalization (Ex: Jared loves the Mavericks.)
- Spelled all words correctly? (Don’t just use spellcheck; get your dictionary!)
- Formatted with MLA, APA or CSE style? (Check out our MLA and APA Quick Guides!)