
Proofreading

With the Writing Development Centre

Proofreading is the final step in the writing process, showing that you've taken care over it and checked it thoroughly for accuracy and consistency. Proofreading helps give your reader a good impression of your work.

The term 'proofreading' means to check the final draft to correct any issues of formatting, spelling, grammar and small errors like typos. Although these issues don't reflect the quality of your ideas, they may affect the clarity of your writing and might irritate your reader. Proofreading is different to editing, which is the process of reviewing content, style and structure. Proofreading might seem like a superficial issue compared to editing, but it's worth doing to show your work in its best light and demonstrate your attention to detail.

Principles

An effective proofreading strategy can be to take the perspective of the reader rather than the writer, to see it afresh through the marker's eyes. This can be challenging; because you wrote it, you are naturally so close to it that you can often only see what you think it says, not what it does say! Your brain may correct errors and complete gaps without you realising. Most proofreading strategies therefore aim to help you distance yourself from your work in order to read it from a fresh vantage point and therefore be open to spotting errors and inconsistencies.

A good way of getting distance is leaving a day or two between finishing the final draft and proofreading it. Time is the best way to gain the distance you need from your own work to see it clearly again. Of course, leaving time isn't always possible, in which case the following strategies will help you either create distance from your own writing or help you pay very close, detailed attention

Gaining distance: techniques to try

Print it out: You have probably been used to seeing your writing on the computer screen. Printing and checking a hard copy can help you see it in a new format and a new light.

Change the font: You're very used to seeing familiar fonts like Ariel or Times New Roman. Try temporarily converting it into a different font to make it look less familiar. For some students, a font that is slightly harder to read can make your brain work to see what's actually there – try [Sans Forgetica](#), which was developed for this purpose.

Slow down: Professional editors often place a ruler or a piece of paper under each line of writing or follow their finger as they read. Adopting this technique may help you to slow down and guide your eye to focus on one sentence or word at a time. Read aloud: Reading your work out loud helps prevent you from reading ahead and skipping words. Your ears may hear errors that your eyes might miss. It can also help you pick up on issues with punctuation.

Get the computer to read it out: Text-to-speech software, such as ClaroRead Plus and NaturalReader, can read your work out loud for you. They can also support the identification of words which are pronounced the same but spelt differently (for instance sight and site). ClaroRead Plus is available to all students on networked computers and is especially useful for students with dyslexia. For information about accessing assistive technologies on your personal computer, visit [Newcastle University's IT service](#).

More information

Newcastle University doesn't offer a proofreading service. If you are considering asking a friend or employing a proofreader, see our related guide [Working with a Proofreader](#) to ensure that the types of changes the proofreader recommends are in accordance with Newcastle University's Statement on Collusion and the requirements of your assessment.

To support students with specific learning difficulties, the Specialist Learning Team in Student Wellbeing carries out paired proofreading and one-to-one study skills sessions. For more information, visit www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/learningsupport.

Need to review your study strategies?

[Book a one to one appointment](#) with us for personalised study advice tailored to you, your subject and level of study.