

# Using Proofreading Tips

## *What is proofreading?*

Proofreading your writing is the final check that should be completed before a deadline. Commonly confused with editing (a check for content and structure), proofreading checks for surface errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Proofreading is *not* rereading your paper; in contrast, it is *examining* the sentences and paragraphs themselves to make sure that they follow the spelling, punctuation, and grammatical rules of English. While the spell- and grammar-check options of word processing programs can help you catch some errors, proofreading yourself will allow you to catch mistakes that they may have missed.

## *To help you proofread...*

- **Plan proofreading into your schedule** Provide a decent amount of time for proofreading so you can devote your full concentration to examining your writing. If it is difficult for you to maintain such concentration over a long period of time, plan several short blocks of time and proofread one section at a time.
- **Choose a quiet place to proofread** Proofreading is all about concentrating on your writing. In order to maintain the concentration needed to proofread properly, avoid areas that with noise or other distractions.
- **Choose a medium that works best for you** Whether on paper or on the computer, proofreading on a medium with which you are comfortable is imperative to maintaining your concentration and energy.
- **Change the look of your paper** By changing the color, font, or spacing of your work, it no longer looks like what you wrote, allowing you to examine it more thoroughly and without any presuppositions about words or punctuation you think are already there.
- **Slowly read your paper out loud** By reading your writing out loud, it forces you to read every word you wrote, allowing you to see mistakes you may have missed by reading silently.
- **Keep a list of your common writing errors near you while you proofread** By keeping this list near you, it will remind you to look for those errors in particular. In addition, try reading for one error at a time. This will allow you to focus all of your concentration on that one error, lessening the chance of missing a mistake.
- **Circle or highlight every punctuation mark in your writing** Doing so will force you to pay attention to each mark used and its purpose in your sentence or paragraph. This tip is especially helpful if you commonly misuse or overuse a particular mark, such as a comma or semi-colon.
- **Read from the end of your paper to the beginning** Similarly to reading out loud, reading your writing from bottom to top forces you to read everything you wrote. This allows you to check whether what is on the page is actually what you wanted to write.
- **Utilize the "Search" option on your word processing program** If you are aware of certain spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that you commonly make, searching for those errors in your document may make finding the errors easier and less time-consuming.