



General Strategies for Editing and Proofreading

When you look over your papers to make sure that you have presented your ideas clearly, you send a message—you think your ideas are good enough to deserve a careful presentation.

Writers make changes to their papers at different levels. Knowing about these levels can help you divide up the job of getting a paper ready to hand in.

- **Read your paper aloud**, or have someone read it aloud to you. We often “hear” more of our errors than we see.
- **Leave as much time as you can between finishing writing a paper and editing and proofreading it.** This lets you “re-see” the paper with rested eyes and a more distanced perspective.
- **Read the paper backward**—from the end to the beginning—one sentence (for editing) or one word (for proofreading) at a time. This helps you concentrate on sentences and words rather than on the paper’s meaning as a whole.
- **Proofread one sentence at a time** by using two pieces of blank white paper to cover all but one sentence at a time. This helps reduce visual noise and keeps you from being distracted by other sentences.
- **Set aside adequate time for proofreading**, just as you set aside time for research and writing.
- **Build editing and proofreading into your writing process** at the best place for you. Many writers like to leave it for last so that they can concentrate on their ideas first.
- Good writers do not necessarily know all the grammar and punctuation “rules,” but they do know where to look them up. **Find and use resources.**
 - dictionaries
 - thesauruses
 - software writing programs
 - handbooks
 - handouts
 - other writers
- **Keep resources handy** when you write so that you are not tempted to guess about how to correct your errors.
- **Ask other writers** to listen to you read your paper, to read your paper as you listen, and to help you figure out and apply grammar rules. Good writers do not do it alone.
- **Know and keep a list of your errors** so that you know what to look for in your papers.
- Read your paper a few times, **looking for one error each time**, instead of reading your paper once and trying to catch all of your errors.