# A guide to proofreading

## C:\Users\mel.toal\Desktop\FINAL - AIR Resources 18-02-14\planning and writing icon.pngWhat is proofreading and why is it important?

Proofreading is the process of reading a passage of text to find errors and make corrections. Proof reading is important as a lot of the reading we do, we do to ingest content rather than to carefully check spelling and grammar. While some errors will be picked up by skimming over your work, some you will literally ‘skim over’.

When proof reading there are number of things that you should be looking out for including:

* Spelling
* Punctuation
* Grammar
* Sentence structure
* Duplication of words (eg, it’s common to type ‘the’ twice)
* Negatives and positives (eg Using Don’t or not instead of do – This could completely change the emphasis of your argument)

It is very important to proofread your assignments before handing it in. Some people find it difficult to proofread their own work having written it. One idea is to team up with a peer and proofread each other’s work as well as your own. This way a fresh pair of eyes may spot the errors you don’t and vice versa.

Another way to proof read is to constantly be reviewing your work, for example after each paragraph or section of your work. This way the topic is fresh in your mind therefore it may help you truly understand the points you are trying to get across.

However, although these methods work for some others may find it helpful to revisit the work after some time has passed, it may be easier for you to spot errors this way.

In the same way that people learn differently, you will also proofread differently. It is a process that you will need to try out and find the best way for you.

## Tips and techniques to remember when proofreading

1. **Prepare mentally** – Proofreading for most is not the most exciting of tasks, so you need to prepare yourself for it. It requires patience and concentration to do it. Try saying to yourself ‘I am going to spend the next half an hour proofreading this assignment’. This way you categorised time for this process and can mentally prepare for it.
2. **Print it out** – If it is an online assignment, try printing it out and proofreading it from the paper rather than directly on the screen. Your brain has the habit of remembering writing it, but writing what you meant to say. If you proofread from paper, it breaks this habit and could improve your proofreading
3. **Don’t trust you wrote it correctly –** make sure you read each word and sentence slowly and carefully. It’s easily to take for granted what is there, but the purpose of proofreading is to ensure what you think is there, really is
4. **Remember punctuation –** When proofreading there can be a tendency to concentrate on the words, however the punctuation is just as important so take the time to check this as you proofread
5. **Get someone you trust to proofread it –** After checking it all yourself, it’s useful to ask someone you trust to do the same. As mentioned your brain has a tendency to read what you think you have written and it’s good to have a fresh pair of eyes look at it

## References

Learning and Information Services (2013) *Guide to proofreading* [online] University of Wolverhampton [06/02/14] Available from: <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/lib/PDF/LS001%20Guide%20to%20Proofreading.pdf>