

Proofreading Tips

Other people are usually better than us at spotting our writing errors, because we see what we want. To be a better proofreader, you must make the work unfamiliar to you. Try these tips:

- Take a big break between writing and proofreading to “cleanse your palate”
- Read much more slowly than usual, pausing on every comma and period
- Read out loud, slower, running finger along page and even recording your voice
- When you read out loud, don’t pause unless there is a punctuation mark
- Read your essay backwards, sentence by sentence, to check flow
- Read your essay paragraph by paragraph in chunks, checking topic sentences
- Look at the ends of paragraphs to see if transitions set up the next paragraph
- Draw comments, pictures, or diagrams on the pages themselves
- Use a piece of paper to cover all of the lines you aren't reading, to improve focus
- Pretend you are your audience by role-playing as an “ideal reader”
- Space each sentence on a new line, to ensure correct sentence boundaries
- Check your content, organization, and mechanics
- Find your intro, thesis, body, discussion, conclusion
- Mark the main idea of each paragraph and put it in the topic sentence
- Underline the verbs and prepositions to take charge of their phrases
- Set up and use your spelling checker to find grammar and style problems too
- Look for each type of error at a time, commas, then periods, and then others
- If you find an error, use find/replace to check if you did it multiple times
- Keep track of your own issues by organizing corrections from previous work