

Proofreading Strategies

Proofreading is primarily about searching for and correcting grammatical and typographical errors. Though often used as synonyms, editing and proofreading are very different. **Editing** means making changes to improve the overall quality of your writing in terms of language, expression, and style. Editing should happen *before* you proofread. For some help with editing, see our workshop [Editing Purposefully](#).

Before You Proofread

- **Allow yourself plenty of time to proofread.** Ideally, you should step away from your writing for a day or two, but even a half-hour break can allow you to approach your work with fresh eyes.
- **Print out a hard copy.** Reading from your computer screen is not ideal for everyone. If you don't read as well from a screen, print a copy of your work and proofread with a pen or pencil. Working with a printed copy can create a greater distance between you and your writing, allowing for a fresh view of your work.
- **Keep a list of common errors close by, including a list of commonly confused words.** The MTSU *EasyWriter* contains a list of the most common proofreading errors, so it is a handy resource to have nearby as a guide as you begin the proofreading process.
- **Review previously graded work.** Talk with your instructor or a Writing Consultant to help you identify any troublesome areas in your writing. Knowing your own writing patterns can be a great help when proofreading.

While You Proofread

- **Don't rush!** Read slowly and carefully to allow your eyes the time they need to spot the errors you're looking for.
- **Use the *search in document* function** to look for common errors from your list or handbook.
- **Read backward.** Begin at the end of your paper and read backward, one sentence at a time. This forces you to pay close attention to the sentence and its structure. Since you wrote it, you'll know the order of your sentences and the pattern in which your ideas should develop, so reading from the end can keep you from accidentally "reading" something you didn't actually write.
- **Have a friend, classmate, or tutor read your paper to identify confusing sentences.** Having someone else read your paper is one of the best ways to ensure you find and correct awkward sentence structures, transitions, and run-on sentences. A sentence might seem clear to you but confuse an outside reader.
- **Read aloud.** This strategy can help you recognize run-on sentences, awkward transitions, and other errors you may not notice while reading silently. This strategy can be accomplished in a few different ways:
 - **Read aloud to yourself.**
 - **Read aloud to a friend.**
 - **Have a friend read your paper to you.**

Or, let the Writing Center help!

Stop by LIB 362 or visit us online at mtsu.mywconline.com to schedule an appointment.