

General Strategies

Take a break	When you finish the paper, take a break before proofreading it. While proofreading, take short breaks and only read short blocks of text.
Read aloud	Some students can “hear” their errors even when they cannot see them. You might consider recording yourself while reading and then listen to the recording to find your errors, or read it to a friend.
Check for your common errors	Each time you read a section of your paper, choose only one of your common errors to search for. Check carefully and watch for the small details. Your skill will improve with practice.
Use a cover as you read	This will help you focus on your writing line by line.
Read slowly	This will help you focus on each word.
Read sentences in reverse order	Start at the end of your paper and read sentence by sentence to search for grammar errors. Then start at the end again, word by word, to look for spelling mistakes.



If you need more help, make an appointment with us at...

Student Academic Learning Services

Phone: 905.721.2000 ext. 2491

Email: sals@durhamcollege.ca

or

visit our front desk in room 204,
Student Services Building (SSB)

Student Academic Learning Services

Proofreading

Tips and Strategies for Checking Your Grammar and Punctuation

Find out what errors you typically make.

Review instructors' comments about your writing and/or review your paper with a writing tutor.

Learn how to fix those errors.

Talk with your instructor and/or with a writing tutor to learn how to fix the errors.

Give yourself enough time to proofread.

To proofread your paper properly, you will need to read it several times – each time with a different purpose. The more time you give yourself, the better your paper will be.

Each time you proofread your paper, select a different focus.

If you know you have trouble with a specific grammar point, such as subject-verb agreement (He likes it. They like it.), then proofread your paper for that one point. Yes! You will need to proofread several times for different issues.

Are your sentences clear and easy to read?

When a sentence does not flow well as you read, consider changing it. If you, as the writer, have difficulty reading it, then the reader will almost certainly have trouble with it as well.

Proofreading Your Paper

When reading through your completed paper, it is very easy to miss your own mistakes. This handout will teach you how to effectively proofread your work and find your errors.

Before you look for your grammar and punctuation errors, you should look at your paper as a complete document, in terms of the following areas:

Content

- Have you done everything the assignment requires?
- Are your claims accurate and consistent?
- If it is required to do so, does your paper make an argument?
- Is the argument complete?
- Have you supported each point with adequate evidence?
- Is all of the information in your paper relevant to the assignment and/or your overall writing goal?

Overall structure

- Does your paper have an appropriate introduction and conclusion?
- Is your thesis clearly stated in your introduction?
- Is it clear how each paragraph in the body of your paper is related to your thesis?
- Are the paragraphs arranged in a logical sequence?
- Have you made clear transitions between paragraphs?

Structure within paragraphs

- Is there a clear topic sentence?
- Does each paragraph stick to one idea?
- Are there any extraneous or missing sentences in any of your paragraphs?

Clarity

- Have you explained any important terms that might be unclear to your reader?
- Is the meaning of each sentence clear?
- Is it clear what each pronoun (he, she, it, they, which, who, this, etc.) refers to?
- Have you chosen the proper words to express your ideas? Take care when using words from a thesaurus that are not part of your normal vocabulary; you may misuse them.

Style

- Have you used an appropriate tone (formal, informal, persuasive, etc.)?
- Is your use of gendered language (male and female pronouns like "he" or "she," words like "fireman" that contain "man,") appropriate?
- Have you varied the length and structure of your sentences?
- Is the passive voice used too often?
- Does your writing contain a lot of unnecessary phrases like "there is," "there are," "due to the fact that," and so on?

Citations

- Have you appropriately cited quotes, paraphrases, and ideas you researched?
- Are your citations in the correct format (APA, MLA, etc.)?