



WHAT IS

# PROOF READING?



**Cheat Sheet**



Proofreading is an essential part of the writing process. It is the final step you need to take to ensure that you are communicating your ideas clearly and to ensure that you are fulfilling the goals of your writing.

It is more than merely a spell check. It should involve double checking your work against any criteria you have, making sure your references are accurate, your analysis sound, and clarifying any remaining questions or limitations of your work.

# WHAT TO LOOK FOR

## 1. Flow

Checking your structure, paragraphs, development of ideas and in-text citations

## 3. Accuracy

Checking your spelling, punctuation, grammar and referencing

## 2. Clarity

Checking for fluency, how well you have answered the question removing any ambiguity



# WHAT TO LOOK FOR: FLOW

Flow refers to how your work is structured, how well it reads and how coherent your ideas are. These are some key questions you should ask about your work when checking for flow.



Q. Is your argument ordered in a logical manner?

A. Your ideas should be organised in a way that makes sense, and enables your reader to easily follow the flow of your argument.



Q. Are your paragraphs well structured?

A. Each paragraph should contain one main idea; you should begin a new paragraph for each topic you write about.



Q. Are your paragraphs linked?

A. Each paragraph should begin with a sentence linking it to the previous paragraph to indicate how they relate to each other.



Q. Are your sentences complete?

A. You should ensure that sentences are complete, meaning that they make sense when standing alone and they express a complete idea.



Q. Is your introduction and conclusion sound?

A. Your introduction concisely expresses how you will answer the question. Your conclusion should include a final thought on your themes and analysis.





# WHAT TO LOOK FOR: CLARITY

Clarity refers to how easy it is to understand your work, and how well you have answered the question. These are some of the questions you should ask about your work when checking for clarity.



Q. Have you made any assumptions that you have not explained?

A. Are there any limitations or restrictions to your analysis that you have not made explicit?



Q. Is anything unclear?

A. Make sure your sentences are well structured to avoid any ambiguity in your meaning. You should also check that you haven't used any terminology or referred to any concepts that you haven't explained.



Q. Have you answered all elements of the question?

A. Refer back to your assignment question to check that you have done what the task requires.



Q. Are there any unanswered questions?

A. Put yourself in your reader's shoes: are there any questions they might have about your analysis? Have you answered them?



# WHAT TO LOOK FOR: ACCURACY

Accuracy refers to whether there are any errors in your work. A spell checker will not pick everything up! These are some key things to look out for when checking for accuracy.



Q. Have you made any typos?

A. Remember that your spell checker will only tell you if a word is a word, not if it's the right word. You should always check your work manually for any typos.



Q. Is your writing consistent?

A. You should ensure that you've used a consistent voice and tone throughout your piece of work. Also check that you are consistent in your use of past or present tense.



Q. Are there any spelling mistakes?

A. As well as running a spell check, always manually examine your work for any commonly confused pairs of words such as affect/effect



Q. Have you referenced accurately?

A. Failure to reference your work accurately can lead to lost marks, or even accusations of plagiarism.



Q. Have you used correct punctuation?

A. Punctuation exists to make writing easier to understand; punctuating your work inaccurately or sparsely can have the opposite effect!





# Techniques to remember



**4** steps

1



It's a good idea to leave some time after finishing a piece of work, coming back later to proofread it.

When writing a coursework assignment, this means you'll need to plan your time well to ensure you finish writing long enough before the submission deadline to leave time for proofreading!



2



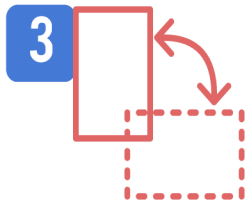
SPEAK IT!



Reading your work aloud is an excellent way to check that your writing is rhythmic and that it flows well.

You will notice areas where your sentences run on too long (you may even run out of breath!), or where they end abruptly.

It will also help you to pick up on areas in which you repeat yourself, or where you have redundancies in your word choice.



If you're typing up an essay, changing the way that your document looks can help you to see it with fresher eyes.

Changing the font, colour and/or size is a quick and easy way to do this.

Printing it off is another good way of changing the way that you read your work.



It's unlikely that you'll spot everything on your first check, so you'll need to do it a few times to get your work to the highest possible standard.

You may want to review your work in stages; do it once looking at flow, again for clarity, then do a final check for accuracy.

The process will be easier if you're only focusing on one thing at a time.

# SUMMARY

Proofreading is a key part of the writing process. It's the time where you take a step back and ask yourself with a critical eye whether you've communicated what you set out to say.

Don't forget, it's about your ideas and argument as much as spelling and grammar; it's important that you allow yourself this time to confirm that you're writing is clear enough for your reader to follow your argument.

# Thank you.



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Reference:

Adapted from The University of Manchester Library -

The University of Manchester Library (2016) Better safe than sorry: proofreading your work.  
Available at: <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learning-objects/mle/proofreading/>  
(Accessed: 15 June 2016)