

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROOFREADING

When composing any type of document, it is essential to proofread the work in order to ensure that all ideas expressed are grammatically and structurally correct. This is especially important in university level papers as clarity is one of the many important components involved in developing a persuasive argument. The following is a list of common errors that should be reviewed before and during the proofreading/editing process as well as tips on how to resolve grammatical and sentence structure issues.

PROOFREADING FOR SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION

Spelling:

1. Inspect each word in the paper individually, and make sure that each word is spelt correctly.
2. If necessary, consult a dictionary to verify a word is spelt correctly and/or conveys the appropriate meaning.

Compound Sentence Commas:

1. Scan the paper for conjunctions: and, but, for, or, nor, so and yet.
2. Check whether there is a complete sentence on each side of a conjunction. If so, a comma needs to be placed before a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, so and yet).

Introductory Commas:

1. Scan the paper by only looking at the first two or three words of each sentence.
2. Stop if one of these words is a dependent marker, a transition word, a participle, or a preposition.
3. Listen for a possible break before the main clause.
4. Place a comma at the end of the introductory phrase or clause, which is before the independent clause.

Comma Splices:

1. Scan the paper and stop at each individual comma.
2. If there is a complete sentence on each side of a comma, then a coordinating conjunction should be added after the comma or replaced by a semicolon.
3. Alternatively, if there is a complete sentence on each side of a comma, then the sentence can be divided into two separate sentences.

Left-out/Missing Words:

1. Reading a paper aloud assists in determining if a word is missing or duplicated.
2. Replace a missing word and remove duplicated words.

PROOFREADING FOR USAGE AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Proofreading for Spelling, Punctuation, and Sentence Usage/Structure

Run-on Sentences:

1. Identify sentences that consist of more than one independent clause.
2. If the independent clauses are not separated by punctuation, then there are three ways to repair the run-on sentence:
 - breaking the sentence into two individual sentences;
 - dividing the two independent with a semicolon;
 - or dividing the two independent sentences with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

Sentence Fragments:

1. Scan the paper and locate sentences that do not form a complete thought (a dependent clause).
2. If a sentence only consists of a dependent clause, then it is a sentence fragment and needs to either be changed into an independent clause or connected to one. As a result, the sentence would then form a complete thought.

Subject/Verb Agreement:

1. Locate the main verb in each sentence.
2. Match the verb to its subject.
3. Make sure that the subject and verb agree in number (singular or plural).

Verb Tense Shift:

1. Scan the paper and locate the verbs in each sentence.
2. Make sure the tenses of verbs are consistent and do not shift from past to present.

Pronoun Reference/Agreement:

1. Scan the paper and examine each pronoun, especially *its*, *this*, *they*, *their*, and *them*.
2. Locate the noun that the pronoun replaces. If a noun cannot be found, then one needs to be implemented before the first pronoun or simply changed from a pronoun to a noun.
3. If a noun can be located, then it must agree in number and person with the pronoun.

Parallel Structure:

1. Scan the paper and stop at any key words that signal parallel structures (sentences that use the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. They are usually joined together with the use of coordinating conjunctions such as “and” or “or”). Attention should be especially paid to *and*, *or*, *not only...but also*, *either...or*, *neither...nor*, *both...and*.
2. The objects connected by these words (adjectives, nouns, phrases, etc.) must be in the same grammatical form.¹

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