



Proofreading Your Paper

General Tips:

1. Know yourself as a writer.
 - What mistakes do you commonly make? Look for them and know how to correct them.
2. Take a break between writing and editing.
 - Though it should be longer, even a five minute break will help you to catch more errors in your paper. It is best to walk away from your work for some time and return with a clear head for editing.
3. Read slowly and aloud.
 - Reading your paper aloud will help you to catch more errors. The more senses you involve, the more likely you are to recognize a mistake.
4. Use something to cover all text below the line being read.
 - Placing something as simple as a blank sheet of paper over the text will help you to remain focused on the line you are reading, forcing you to look more closely at the characters on the page.
5. Never assume the spell and grammar checks are correct.
 - Many typographical errors or Microsoft Word “autocorrect” changes will not be picked up by spell check. Likewise, grammar check may fail to recognize some errors, so never assume that they are correct. If you have a question, ask someone or look it up.



Essay Structure:

1. Identify thesis statement.
 - Your essay needs this strong, main idea sentence to provide your reader with a specific idea of what is to follow in the paper. This statement should provide the basic structure for your paper. (For help with thesis statements, please see one of the ARC’s writing tutors.)
2. Identify topic sentences.
 - Topic sentences should basically be a thesis statement for each individual paragraph. They should appear at the beginning of the paragraph and state the main idea/argument for that paragraph. (For help with topic sentences, please see one of the ARC’s writing tutors.)
3. Identify supporting ideas.
 - Each idea presented should have ideas/facts to back it up. If you have anything in the paragraph/essay that does not support the main idea, remove it.
4. Identify transitions.
 - Between ideas and paragraphs, appropriately place transitions to connect the ideas and to develop a flow for the paper.



5. Review the organization to make sure that all ideas are logical and clearly organized and connected.
 - If necessary, develop an outline from your existing essay. Are your ideas presented in a logical order, or should some paragraphs be reorganized? Are all ideas presented as clearly and concisely as possible? If not, clarify anything that may be misunderstood.
6. Confirm there is a strong “grabbing” sentence to draw your reader into the paper?
 - Does your first sentence intrigue the reader enough to continue reading? If it does not or if you question it, revise the sentence. If you are unsure how to do this, discuss it with a writing tutor.
7. Confirm that your conclusion successfully “wraps up” your paper?
 - Does your conclusion summarize the information already stated in the essay, or does it bring in new information? Remove any new information because no new information should be presented in the conclusion.



Sentence Structure:

1. Review sentence variety.
 - Sentences should be a variety of lengths and styles to avoid a choppy or monotonous feeling to the writing. If you are unsure how to do this, discuss it with a writing tutor.
2. Remove jargon, clichés, slang, and unnecessary sarcasm.
 - While these elements may be humorous in personal writing, they are inappropriate in academic writing. What is the basic point you are trying to make? Can you say it without jargon, clichés, slang, and sarcasm?
3. Remove all unnecessary words.
 - Your writing should be as concise as possible. Remove all “filler” words from your writing, and be sure that everything written is said concisely.
4. Review word choice for clarity, meaning, and repetition.
 - Look at each of the words you selected. Is this the best word to express what you mean? If not, what is? Have you used the word in multiple places? If so, how else could you say it?
5. Check all modifiers to make sure they are placed appropriately with the word they modify.
 - Misplaced and dangling modifiers often create confusion for readers. Are your modifiers positioned next to the word or phrase they modify? If not, reorganize the sentence. For help with modifiers, speak with a writing tutor.

Grammar and Mechanics:

1. Subject/Verb agreement
 - Do your subjects and verbs agree in number?
2. Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement
 - Do your pronouns and antecedents agree in number and gender?
3. Verb Tense
 - Is the tense consistent throughout the paper?
4. Split infinitives
 - Did you place any words/modifiers within an infinitive verb (i.e. “to finally accomplish” instead of “to accomplish finally”)?
5. Capitalization
 - Are all words appropriately capitalized? If you are unsure about a word, do not guess; look it up.
6. Spelling
 - Are you certain that all words are spelled correctly? If not, circle the words of which you are unsure, and look them up.
7. Missing words
 - Reading a paper aloud will help you to catch any missing words within the paper.
8. Parallelism
 - Are items in a list in the same form (i.e. all nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.)?
9. Never end with a preposition.
 - Revise sentences that have a preposition at the end. (For help with prepositions, see a writing tutor and/or refer to the ARC’s “Parts of Speech” handout.)

