

A Proofreading Strategy for College Writers

Proofreading your own writing:

- Don't proofread until you are happy with your content. Read through your piece to make sure your organization and support are effective. Take out any unneeded words or sentences. Check quotes for accuracy.
- When you are confident that your content is on target, begin to proofread. Here is a strategy that research says corrects 80% of a writer's editing mistakes. It draws on your brain, your eye and your ear to find and fix errors.

- Darken each period (or end punctuation) in your piece.
- Notice the length of your sentences. Plan to double-check long sentences and very short ones.
- Ready? Begin with the last sentence of your paper.
- Read out loud.
- Read slowly.
- Read every word just as you have written it.
- As you focus on each sentence, revise and edit as needed.
- When you are satisfied with a sentence, check it off. (✓)
- Move up to the next sentence and repeat the process.
- Continue sentence by sentence through the paragraph.
- If you find you are correcting the same type of error more than once, be aware of these patterns. Be on the alert for them.
- Continue on through your paper, paragraph by paragraph, until you have proofread the whole piece.

Building your proofreading skills:

- Get a grammar book and learn to use the table of contents!
- Be aware of how long it takes you to proofread one paragraph of your own writing. Be aware of how much time you will need to proofread your whole piece. Schedule time to proofread your writing before you submit it.
- Be aware of patterns of error in your own writing. You will need to check for these errors each time you write. Over time, you will get better at editing your own writing.
- If you are uncertain about an area in your paper, put a question mark in the margin. Double-check it with someone whose judgment you trust.
- Want to work with a tutor? NHC Writing Center: <http://nhwriting.lonestar.edu>