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# Proofreading



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# Introduction

Many people think that proofreading is just a ten minute job which involves checking for typos and spelling mistakes or don't even bother to review their work at all. However, when done properly, it can mean the difference between a pass and a fail.

Some key aspects to check are:

1. Whether or not you have **addressed the assignment brief.**
2. Whether you have structured your argument **logically.**
3. Whether the piece **flows** and the reader is signposted from one paragraph to the next.

# How to approach proofreading

## Preparing to proofread

When planning your assignment preparation, build in at least two days for proofreading. Always make sure that you print off your assignment before you proofread it as many mistakes can be missed if you read the assignment on a PC or laptop screen.

## Assume an objective approach

When you have finished writing, leave it until the following day before you proofread. This allows you to be more objective and analytical in reviewing your work.

You might find it helps to read your assignment out loud. This will help you identify those sentences which are too long and may help pinpoint where a comma is needed. It may also help to ensure the writing makes sense. You might also want to ask someone else to read it for you; this should be someone who knows nothing about the course, so avoid asking a fellow student! They will be able to tell you

whether or not it makes sense. **Please note though, that any changes must be made by you, otherwise you are at risk of collusion.**

Review each sentence in turn, then one paragraph at a time

Proofread one sentence at a time. Check that each sentence makes sense and is a complete idea; for example, 'As Smith (2000) states.' is not a complete idea. However, 'Smith (2000) states that reviewing work at least once can lead to higher grades' is a complete idea and is therefore a complete sentence. Use the spell check software to check spelling, grammar and punctuation but check it yourself as well because sometimes even if the word is spelt correctly, it may be the wrong word for your sentence (e.g. too or to are easily mistyped). Make sure there is a variety of sentence lengths; some short and some long. Look for those sentences which might be considered too long and would be better as two shorter sentences.

Once you are sure all the sentences in the paragraph are correct, read the whole paragraph. Have you introduced the theme of

the paragraph in the first sentence? In the main body of the paragraph have you developed the topic, included evidence and your own analysis? In the final sentence have you indicated where you are moving onto next by using linking words and phrases?

## Have you explained what you mean?

Make sure you have explained what you mean. When your lecturer reads each paragraph, will they understand what you are trying to say? You may understand what you are talking about, but is it clear to other people?

## Does your writing conform to the rules of academic writing?

Make sure that your writing conforms to the rules of academic writing. Consider each of the following points:

1. Have you used complex language rather than everyday informal words and phrases?

2. Have you checked there are no contractions such as 'don't'?
3. Make sure there are no informal phrasal verbs, for example, 'put off' and 'bring up'.
4. Avoid using rhetorical questions.
5. If you've given an indication of quantity such as 'a lot', consider changing this to a figure so the reader has an accurate idea of how much you mean.
6. Unless you are working on a piece of reflective writing, remember to remain objective by not including any pronouns such as 'I', 'we' or 'you'.
7. Make use of signposting words (e.g. 'in contrast', 'furthermore' and 'consequently') to help indicate how ideas link together.
8. Consider the importance of 'hedging', a concept in which you write cautiously because you cannot be 100% certain of the facts. Words such as 'might', 'could' and 'possibly' are used. (adapted from [www.ueafap.com](http://www.ueafap.com))

Have you checked that you have answered the question, considered the marking criteria and reviewed past feedback?

When you have checked each sentence and each paragraph, you then need to read the whole assignment. This time you are checking that:

1. You have answered the brief by addressing the **action words** in the title (e.g. critically analyse, compare and contrast).
2. Your argument is logical. Consider each of the premises (a statement that will justify a conclusion). Have you got clear **evidence** for each argument?
3. You have been sufficiently **analytical** rather than descriptive. Some description may be necessary but too much can use up your word limit. Make sure you have really considered the strengths and weaknesses of theories discussed rather than just describing the theories.
4. You have addressed the **feedback** that you received from your tutor regarding previous assignments. For

example if they have said that you have not supported your ideas with appropriate sources, have you done so this time?

## Check your citations and reference list

Check your references according to the University standards. Make sure that you have a citation in the appropriate place within the assignment and a full reference in the reference list at the end.

## Resources to help you proofread

The University of Manchester Phrasebank website is useful for finding academic phrases that will help link paragraphs:

[www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk)

For help with punctuation, including the use of commas: [www.uefap.com](http://www.uefap.com)

Check your referencing with APA 6th (Harvard) Style Handbook:

<https://www.salford.ac.uk/skills-for-learning/home/using-and-referencing-information/referencing>

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