

Proofreading and Editing

APSU Writing Center Handout

Before submitting an assignment, review your paper for spelling errors, unclear content, and other issues. Both proofreading and editing improve clarity, correctness, and readability.

Editing

The process of revising your writing to polish the final product.

Focuses on clarity, style, and citations.

Proofreading

The final step in the writing process focused on rereading your writing to catch small errors.

Focuses on spelling errors, typos, grammar, and missing punctuation.

Editing Strategies

1. Find the Longest Sentences

- Count the words before the verb.
- Simplify long subjects.
- Break sentences longer than three lines into shorter ones.

2. Find Passive Verbs

Replace forms of “is, are, was” with active verbs.

- **Passive:** The homework was finished by Maria.

- **Active:** Maria finished the homework.

3. Check Verb Tense Consistency

- Check and make sure all verbs are in the correct tense and follow the sequence of tenses.
- Usually, essays are written with past tense verbs, but occasionally a present or future tense verb may be needed

4. Eliminate Redundancy

Cut repeated ideas or unnecessary phrases.

- **Wordy:** The project was completed successfully and without any problems.
- **Concise:** The project was completed successfully.

5. Reduce Prepositions

Replace wordy prepositional phrases with shorter alternatives.

- **Wordy:** The instructions are for the purpose of helping students.
- **Concise:** The instructions help students.

6. Convert “-ion” Nouns to Verbs

Use verbs instead of abstract nouns to make your writing stronger.

- **Noun:** The evaluation of the project took two weeks.
- **Verb:** We evaluated the project for two weeks.

7. Check References

- Confirm all citations are formatted correctly.
- Ensure sources match your reference or works cited list.

8. Use a Thesaurus and Spellchecker

- Find stronger word choices.
- Fix typos and avoid repetition.
- Double-check spellchecker suggestions for context and tone.

Proofreading Strategies

1. Take a Break

Stop working on your writing for several hours before rereading.

A fresh perspective makes it easier to catch mistakes in your writing.

2. Read Aloud

Read your paper aloud by yourself, with a peer, or with a writing tutor.

Hearing your words can help identify awkward sentences, verb errors, and missing words.

3. Focus on One Problem at a Time

Review your writing multiple times, each read through focusing on a single issue, such as sentence structure, word choice, spelling, and punctuation.

4. Cover Lines with a Blank Sheet

Use a blank sheet of paper to cover the rest of your writing and read one line at a time.

5. Circle Punctuation

Go through your paper and circle every punctuation mark.

Check for missing commas, periods, and quotation marks.

6. Change Font

Switch the document's font style or size.

The new look helps you see spacing issues and typos that you might have missed.

Final Questions to Ask Yourself

Is my paper formatted correctly?

Does my spacing reflect true double-spacing?

Are the font type and size consistent?

Do I have a clear thesis statement?

Do my paragraphs begin with topic sentences that support my thesis?

Are my sentences clear, effective, and error-free?

References

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