

Proofreading and Editing Strategies

General Strategies:

- Set the paper aside for at least a day between writing and editing it. This will allow you to catch more errors.
- Read the paper aloud. Sometimes, we do not see mistakes, but if we hear them read aloud, we can catch them.
- Make an outline of your paper
 - Write your thesis statement.
 - Write the main idea of each paragraph under the thesis statement.
 - Make sure each main idea is relevant to the thesis statement and if they are written in a logical order.
 - Make sure the relationships between paragraphs and ideas are expressed clearly.
- Will your audience understand your writing? Try reading your paper from another perspective. What questions might the audience have? Answer them in an appropriate place. Add details if you feel the audience may need clarification.
- Think about your tone and diction. Is it appropriate for your topic and audience?

Specific Issues:

Strategies for Catching Sentence and Word Level Issues:

- Read your paper slowly. This will give you more time to focus on what you are saying and catch errors.
- Read aloud.

Noticing Personal Problem Areas:

- Recognize errors you often make and look for those types of mistakes as you read your paper.
- Talk with your teacher, a tutor, the Center for Writers, etc. for advice on how to fix these errors.

Pay Close Attention to Subjects, Verbs, Clarity, and Sentences:

- Make sure your subject is concrete rather than abstract.
 - More attractiveness is sometimes given an act when it is made illegal.—Abstract.
 - When an act becomes illegal, some people find it more attractive.—Concrete.
- Avoid wordiness when possible.
 - They were desirous of a good meal.—Wordy.
 - They wanted a good meal.—Clear.
- Use active verbs. You want to select the most precise verbs you can. Therefore, avoid forms of "to be."
 - Inflation is a threat to our economy.—Weak verb.
 - Inflation threatens our economy.—Active verb.
- Write your ideas as clearly as you can.
 - There were several reasons for the United States' entrance into the war.—Wordy.
 - The United States entered the war for several reasons.—Clear.

- Avoid clichés. They are often used so often they have lost their meaning.
 - Her behavior flipped me out.—Cliché.
 - Her behavior first stunned, then delighted me.—Original.
- Combine sentences when possible to create a smooth rhythm.

Grammar

- Check for subject/verb agreement.
 - Find the main verb in each sentence.
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 - Make sure the subject and verb agree in number (singular or plural).
- Check your pronoun references and agreement.
 - Skim your paper for pronouns like "it," "this," "they," "their," and "them."
 - Find the noun that the pronoun replaces. If there is no noun, add one before the pronoun or change the pronoun to a noun. If there is a noun make sure the noun and pronoun agree in number and person.
- Check for parallel structure.
 - Look for words like "and" or "or" that signal a list or words like "not only...but also," "either...or," "neither...nor," or "both...and" that connect parts of the sentence.
 - Make sure that the items connected by these words (adjectives, nouns, phrases, verbs, etc.) are the same grammatical form.
- Check comma usage in compound sentences.
 - Look for conjunctions ("and," "but," "for," "or," "nor," "so," and "yet.")
 - If the conjunction is connecting two complete sentences, place a comma before the conjunction.
- Check for comma splices.
 - Look for every comma.
 - Determine if there is a full sentence on each side of the comma. If so, add a conjunction after the comma or take the comma out and replace it with a semicolon.
- Check for fragments.
 - Does each sentence have a subject and verb and make sense by itself? If not, add the missing part.
- Check for run-on sentences.
 - Check to see if your sentences have more than one independent clause.
 - Break the sentence into two sentences if necessary.