

Proofreading Checklist



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Proofreading your own work can sometimes be difficult to do. You might not know what mistakes you've made or how to go about correcting them. This handout outlines some of the most important things to keep in mind when proofreading your essay.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Every sentence needs at least a subject and a verb. The subject and the verb should be singular or plural and the verb should agree with the subject.

INCORRECT: That *clown scare* me.

CORRECT: That *clown scares* me. .

VERB TENSES

Look through your essay for shifting tenses. Tip: Think about the time of the action being described. Was it in the past? Does it happen now? Will it happen in the future?

INCORRECT: When the other swimmers *jumped* into the pool, my brother *jumps* in after them.

CORRECT: When the other swimmers *jumped* into the pool, my brother *jumped* in after them.

COMPLETE SENTENCES

Every sentence needs to form a complete thought in order to avoid being a fragment or a run-on sentence.

SENTENCE FRAGMENT: When she borrowed my car.

RUN-ON SENTENCE: She drove my car into a tree, I was mad at her.

COMPLETE SENTENCE: When she borrowed my car, she drove it into a tree, and I was mad at her.

ACTIVE VS. PASSIVE VOICE

In active voice, the subject *performs* the action in the sentence. This is direct, easy to understand, and more emphatic. In passive voice, the subject is *receiving* the action. This isn't incorrect, but it's sometimes less clear than active voice. Always try to write in active voice if you have the opportunity.

PASSIVE VOICE: The car *was driven* back home by Michael.

ACTIVE VOICE: Michael *drove* the car back home.

Proofreading Checklist, Cont'd

PRONOUNS

Sometimes pronouns like *this*, *that*, or *it* can take the place of nouns in a sentence, but be careful. Too many vague pronouns can make a sentence confusing to read.

INCORRECT: When the dog jumped onto the table, *it* fell. (What is “it?” The dog or table?)

CORRECT: The table fell when the dog jumped onto it.

PUNCTUATION

Knowing when to use the right punctuation mark is essential to writing. Some examples of the punctuation marks students commonly misuse:

Commas – Putting a comma in the wrong place, or omitting one altogether, can make a sentence confusing, and sometimes, unintentionally hilarious. Be sure to only use a comma when you need a pause in your writing, like between items in a series, or before a conjunction like *and* or *but*.

Incorrect: I went to the grocery store the bank and the restaurant.

Correct: I went to the grocery store, the bank, and the restaurant.

Incorrect: Let’s eat Grandpa. (You are threatening to eat your grandfather!)

Correct: Let’s eat, Grandpa.

Apostrophes – Apostrophes are used in sentences to do one of two things. The first is to show the reader that a noun is possessive. The second use of apostrophes is to show an omission in a contraction.

Incorrect: Are you going to Jackie’s party? I *cannot* go.

Correct: Are you going to *Jackie’s* party? I *can’t* go.

SPELLING

Reading your papers aloud can help you catch typos. Always keep a dictionary and thesaurus handy when you’re writing. If you are tech-savvy, feel free to use online resources or check out the apps available for your smartphone. At the same time, try to limit how often you use spellcheck by learning how to spell words you often misspell.