

HOW TO PROOFREAD YOUR OWN PAPER EFFECTIVELY

For quick help, read through the first two pages of this handout; for more in-depth help, work the rest of the pages.

1. When writing your first draft, double-space and use only one side of the paper. This arrangement makes your paper easier to read and allows room for editing.
2. Let it "rest." Don't proofread your paper as soon as you finish. Have a snack or call a friend—then proofread. Let it rest overnight. A second proofing the next day is usually more effective.
3. When proofreading, read **aloud slowly**. Pause after each sentence. Make sure you read exactly what is written—not what you think you wrote.
4. Try reading the paper backwards, sentence by sentence. This technique makes you focus on one sentence at a time.
5. Use a different color ink to help you easily find your corrections when you retype/rewrite your paper.
6. Proofread your paper twice: once for content and organization and once for grammar.
7. Don't count on your computer's spell check to do your final proofing for you. It helps, but your eyes need to go over the paper, word by word, before it is turned in. Watch out for homonyms—words that sound alike but which have different meanings: e.g., they're, there, their; for, four, fore.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

CONTENT/ORGANIZATION

Thesis:

1. Highlight the thesis sentence. Circle the specific words that indicate the purpose of the paper.
2. What is the thesis or reason this paper was written?
3. What does your thesis sentence say?
4. Does your thesis sentence match the purpose of this paper?
5. Does your thesis sentence match the assignment for this paper?

Body:

1. Underline the topic sentence of each paragraph.
2. Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence?
3. Does the topic sentence of each paragraph support or describe a reason for your thesis?
4. Does each paragraph have sentences that support the topic sentence?
5. Are your examples/explanations concrete and based on fact, not opinion?
6. Are your examples/explanations summarized or wrapped up at the end of the paragraph?

Conclusion:

1. Does the conclusion restate the purpose of your paper?
2. Does the conclusion summarize the points described in your paper or lead to an outlook for the future?

MORE TO LOOK FOR

GRAMMAR

1. Are all the sentences complete? Does each one have a subject and a verb? (refer to SLAC's *Punctuation Pattern Sheet*)
2. Are all commas and other punctuation marks used correctly? (refer to a grammar text or handbook)
3. Are all verbs in agreement with their subjects?
4. Do all pronouns have a single, clear referent?
5. Have you looked up hard-to-spell words in a dictionary?
6. Have any words been omitted or repeated unnecessarily?
7. Check your paper for typos that are missed by the computer's spell check.

SOME FINAL STEPS

1. Are there any sentences that are hard to read, wordy, or unclear? (Rewrite these!)
2. Does the paper flow from paragraph to paragraph?
3. Could a person who knows relatively little about your topic understand this paper?
4. Have a friend read your paper. He or she will have "fresh eyes" for proofreading.

PRACTICE PROOFING

The following edit checks are to help you spot errors in printed copy much like you must do in your paper.

EDIT CHECK #1

DIRECTIONS: In the following excerpt taken from the *Austin American Statesman*, some punctuation has been removed, some spelling and capitalization errors have been inserted. Read the article, then correct the spelling and capitalization, and insert the necessary punctuation on the copy below. There are seventeen errors.

The manual on you're fancy new home entertainment center system says to "access the next highest programmed station setting" on the TV but warns "the audio could be muted with improper handling.

If you didnt understand the instructions they told you to change the channel and to press the right button oar risk losing sound.

Millions of americans belong to the growing ranks of technodolts. "They have trouble doing things like setting VCR clocks or tapping television programs; they are thoroughly confused by many home electronics instruction books written in engineer speak and cluttered with graphics," says Karen Schriver, an English profesor at Carnegie Mellon University.

Schriver was recruited by Mitsubishi Electronics America Inc. to rewrite it's manuals, so the average consumer can understand them.

Over the past two years she will make hundreds of revisions. Technical references and abbreviations were zapped and

complicated drawings cleared up.

The beefier manuals was published on glossy paper with warning boxes, lots of white space, colored lines and detailed indexes. The older manuals were flimsy, crowded and dull.

The new manuals were packaged with this years Mitsubishi television sets and stereo gear. New books will accompany 1991s videocassette recorders, video cameras and laser disk players.

After making your corrections, compare your changes to the corrected article. If you do not understand why punctuation, spelling, or capitalization changes need to be made, please ask a writing tutor for further explanation.

Corrections – Edit Check #1

The manual on your¹ fancy new home entertainment center system says to "access the next highest programmed station setting" on the TV but warns "the audio could be muted with improper handling."²

If you didn't³ understand the instructions,⁴ they told you to change the channel and to press the right button or⁵ risk losing sound.

Millions of Americans⁶ belong to the growing ranks of "technodolts."⁷ "They have trouble doing things like setting VCR clocks or taping⁸ television programs; they are thoroughly confused by many home electronics instruction books written in engineer-speak⁹ and cluttered with graphics," says Karen Schriver, an English professor¹⁰, at Carnegie Mellon University.

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1. your –use possessive pronoun not the contraction for "you are"
2. (")—close quotation
3. n't—apostrophe to indicate omitted letters in a contraction
4. (,)—comma following an introductory subordinate clause
5. or—wrong word: "or" indicates a choice, "oar" an implement used to propel a boat
6. Americans—derived from a proper noun and keeps a proper meaning
7. "technodolts."—quotation marks to call attention to an unusual word
8. taping—adding "ing" to a word ending with a silent "e"—"tape"
9. engineer-speak—two words serving as a single adjective
10. professor—misspelled word
11. its—possessive does not have an apostrophe
12. has made—phrase "over the past two years" indicates past tense
13. were—subject-verb agreement—the subject "manuals" is plural and requires the plural form of the verb
14. indexes—words ending in "x" generally add "es"
15. (')—add apostrophe to form possessive
16. (')—add apostrophe to form possessive
17. (-)—hyphen joins two words forming a single adjective

EDIT CHECK #2

Directions: Examine the following article from the *Austin American Statesman*. Correct errors in usage, spelling and punctuation that you find. There are twenty-five errors.

CHICAGO—They called the old Minnesota Vikings the Purple People Eaters.

The new Vikings dont have the nickname but they chewed Jim Harbaugh and the Chicago Bears the way the old Vikings might have.

The Vikings pounded the Bears 38 10 Monday night to take command of the NFC Central race as journeyman Linebacker Jack Del Rio turned the game with an 84-yard interception return for a touchdown and picked off another Harbaugh pass to end a Chicago threat and set up a Minnesota feild goal.

Linebacker Carlos Jenkins adds the final insult by returning an interception off Peter Tom Willis 19 yards for a touchdown

It was the second time this season that the Bears were done in by Minnesota interceptions. The Vikings won the first meeting 21-10 when Todd Scott's fourth quarter return for a TD began a run that erased a 20-0 Chicago lead. Scotts TD at the Metrodome a month ago came on an audable that drove Coach Mike Ditka to verbally assault his quarterback on the sideline.

The combination of the too wins over Chicago left Minnesota at 6-2 and effectively three games ahead of the Bears 4-4 in the division. Thats because if the two teams tie, the Vikings get the first tiebreaker by virtue of the two victories.

The worst home loss in Ditzas 11 seasons as coach of the Bears was a career game for Del Rio, whom entered the game with just three interceptions in 7 1/2 seasons with New Orleans, Kansas City Dallas and the Vikings. Last week he just missed a game saving interception two plays before Washington's Chip Lohmiller kicked the deciding field goal at Minneappolis.

Del Rio's performance overshadowed three sacks of Harbaugh by John Randle who lead a pass rush that dropped the quarterback four time.

The Vikings led 14-3 at halftime and 1-yard touchdown runs by Roger Craig and Terry Allen, the second following another Chicago turnover; Darren Lewis fumble at his 32.

One the first play of the second half, Allen fumbled and Shaun Gayle recovered at the Minnesota 21. On the next play Harbaugh aimed for Tom Waddle over the middle.

Waddle was slowed when he ran into empire Neil Gereb and Del Rio dove and grabbed the pass just before it hit the ground. Then he gets up and rumbled down the left sideline, breaking tackles before cutting back for the end zone.

So just 20 seconds after Chicago seemed ready to close the deficit to 14-10 and 36 seconds into the second half, it was 21-3 and the rout was on.

Corrections: **EDIT CHECK #2**

CHICAGO—They called the old Minnesota Vikings the **"Purple People Eaters."**¹

The new Vikings **don't**² have the nickname³ but they chewed Jim Harbaugh and the Chicago Bears the way the old Vikings might have.

The Vikings pounded the Bears **38-10**⁴ Monday night to take command of the NFC Central race as journeyman **linebacker**⁵ Jack Del Rio turned the game with an 84-yard interception return for a touchdown and picked off another Harbaugh pass to end a Chicago threat and set up a Minnesota **field**⁶ goal.

Linebacker Carlos Jenkins **added**⁷ the final insult by returning an interception off Peter Tom Willis 19 yards for a touchdown.⁸

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The combination of the **two**¹¹ wins over Chicago left Minnesota at 6-2 and effectively three games ahead of the Bears (**4-4**)¹² in the division. **That's**¹³ because if the two teams tie, the Vikings get the first tiebreaker by virtue of the two victories.

The worst home loss in **Ditka's**¹⁴ 11 seasons as coach of the Bears was a career game for Del Rio, **who**¹⁵ entered the game with just three interceptions in 7 1/2 seasons with New Orleans, Kansas City,¹⁶ Dallas and the Vikings. Last week he just missed a **game-saving**¹⁷ interception two plays before Washington's Chip Lohmiller kicked the deciding field goal at Minneapolis.

Del Rio's performance overshadowed three sacks of Harbaugh by John Randle, who **led**¹⁸ a pass rush that dropped the quarterback four **times**¹⁹.

The Vikings led 14-3 at halftime and 1-yard touchdown runs by Roger Craig and Terry Allen, the second following another Chicago turnover; Darren Lewis **fumbled**²⁰ at his 32.

On²¹ the first play of the second half, Allen fumbled and Shaun Gayle recovered at the Minnesota 21. On the next play Harbaugh aimed for Tom Waddle over the middle.

Waddle was slowed when he ran into **umpire**²² Neil **Gereb**,²³ and Del Rio dove and grabbed the pass just before it hit the ground. Then he **got**²⁴ up and rumbled down the left sideline breaking tackles before cutting back for the end zone.

So just 20 seconds after Chicago seemed ready to close the deficit to 14-10 and 36 seconds into the second half, it was **21-3**²⁵ and the rout was on.

Edit Check #2 Interpretation:

1. "Purple People Eaters."—quotation marks to call attention to unusual or quoted words.
2. n't—apostrophe to mark omitted letter in a contraction
3. (,)—comma before a coordinating conjunction to join two independent clauses
4. (-)—hyphen—used in reporting scores to indicate the word "to"
5. linebacker—lower case "l"—linebacker is a common noun—no capital needed
6. field—"i" before "e" except after "c"—a good rule of thumb
7. added—reporting an event that has already taken place—use past tense
8. (.)—period to close statement
9. (')—add apostrophe to form possessive
10. audible—misspelled word, replace "a" with "i"
11. two—homonym—word denotes the numeral "2"
12. "()"—setting off information used for clarity or reader's information
13. t's—apostrophe to mark omission of "i" in contraction for "that is"
14. (')—add apostrophe to form possessive
15. who—subjective form of pronoun is needed to act as subject of the verb "entered"
16. (,)—comma to separate series
17. (-)—two words acting as a single adjective
18. led—correct past tense form of verb "lead"
19. times—plural form is indicated by word "four"
20. fumbled—past tense needed in reporting an event that has already happened
21. "on"—wrong word used: "on" a preposition indicating position, place, etc.; "one" is the numeral "1"
22. "umpire"—wrong word—"umpire," a game official; "empire," a political unit, e.g. a kingdom
23. (,)—comma before coordinating conjunction "and" when joining two independent clauses
24. "got"—past tense needed
25. (,)—comma before coordinating conjunction "and" when joining two independent clauses

PROOFREADING EXERCISE #1

Introduction to Your Own Eye Span

1. a. Take an index card or sheet of paper in your hand and cover the slogan below. Quickly uncover it and glance at it at once.
- b. Now glance at one line at a time.

EVERYBODY
IS SUPPORTING THE
THE MORATORIUM

- c. Now read the comment at the bottom of the page.
2. This pyramid is made up of letters of the alphabet in normal order: a b c d e, etc. Each line has two more letters than the line before. Read down, using your card to expose one line at a time, finding out how many letters you can take in with one eye fixation.

a
abc
abcde
abcdefg
abcdefghij

Now proofread each line and refer to the bottom of the page for comment.

3. Here is a pyramid of numbers in normal order. Follow the same directions.

1
123
12345
1243567
123457689

4. Here is a word pyramid. Try again.

a
it
top
bird
smile
indeed
anxeity
complete
newspaper

Comments:

1. In the first example, did you notice the extra "the"?
2. The fourth line in the second example contains a mistake.
3. The fourth and fifth lines in example 3 contain errors.
4. In the last example, the i and the e are reversed in "anxiety."

Source: D. Clark, University of Maryland

PROOFREADING EXERCISE #2

Directions: Some of the following sentences contain spelling errors; others do not. No sentence contains more than one mistake. When you find an error, print the word, correctly spelled, in the "W" column. If you find no errors, write a "C" in the "W" column. If you are doubtful of your choice, put a check mark in the "D" column.

	W	D
1. W.C. Fields said that no man who hated children and dogs could be all bad.	_____	_____
2. We were suprised when snow fell in July.	_____	_____
3. The cowboy rode down the canyon trial into the sunset.	_____	_____
4. When I open my books and start studing, I tend to fall asleep.	_____	_____
5. My father is a rancher, but my brother wants to study diary farming.	_____	_____
6. I'd rather sleep ten hours tonight then go to the concert.	_____	_____
7. He found his boots on the kitchen floor among the empty bottles.	_____	_____
8. Running across campus, he tripped anb broke his ankle.	_____	_____
9. The lecturer seems indifferent to his students' feelings.	_____	_____
10. He gambled his fortune on the cards, and lost everthing he had saved.	_____	_____
11. If there were more trash csns around, the campus might be neater.	_____	_____
12. The only good thing about cold weather is the chance to go skating and skin.	_____	_____
13. Ancient scholars used to argue about how many angels could dance on the point of a pin.	_____	_____
14. If we don't hang separately, we shall all hang togeather.	_____	_____
15. The boy threw the ball though the window.	_____	_____
16. It's not the exams I mind so much as the prepartion.	_____	_____
17. It's difficult to remember the difference between "exceed" and "accede."	_____	_____
18. Proofreading is a difficult but pratical skill.	_____	_____
19. I find it difficult to maintain an interest in Botany 101.	_____	_____
20. Proofreading is harder than writting.	_____	_____
21. She returned from Florida gorgeously tanned.	_____	_____
22. Does any faculty member at the university know all of his students indivially?	_____	_____
23. I keep hoping I'll fall in love.	_____	_____
24. I find Chemistry 1310 throughly confusing.	_____	_____
25. It's better to participate in events than to stand their looking on.	_____	_____

Source: D. Clark, University of Maryland

Answers

- | | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. (C) | 6. than | 11. cans | 16. preparation | 21. gorgeously |
| 2. suprised | 7. kitchen | 12. skiing | 17. (C) | 22. indivially |
| 3. trail | 8. and | 13. (C) | 18. practical | 23. (C) |
| 4. studyng | 9. (C) | 14. together | 19. (C) | 24. thoroughly |
| 5. dairy | 10. everything | 15. through | 20. writting | 25. there |

PROOFREADING EXERCISE #3

Directions: same as for Exercise 2. Caution: The following sentences contain a word that may be misspelled omitted or repeated. If you find any misspellings, omissions or repetitions, make an appropriate note in the "W" column.

	W	D
Example: John fell off bicycle on his way to the supermarket.	<u>off his bicycle</u>	_____

- | | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| 1. The linebacker suffered an injury to his soilder muscles. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. There are many ways of measuring educational achievement, but it is an unhappy truth that that none is particularly successful. | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Subtracting wrong answers from right answers on multiple-choice test is known as "over-correction for chance." | _____ | _____ |
| 4. These are the times that try men's soula. | _____ | _____ |
| 5. English contains many words which were borrowed form Latin and Greek. | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Some methods of instrution are considerably more successful than others. | _____ | _____ |
| 7. For instance, it has been proved that teaching grammar has little or no effect the quality of writing. | _____ | _____ |
| 8. The worst prisoners make the best guards. | _____ | _____ |
| 9. Thorough preparation is essential for success on examinations. | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Perhaps there are eighteen mistakes in this exercise, but I thing there are only fifteen. | _____ | _____ |
| 11. When he gets though with college, he plans to go to graduate school. | _____ | _____ |
| 12. When you finish listening to the tape, turn off tape recorder. | _____ | _____ |
| 13. The girl complained that her roommate ate peanuts all night. | _____ | _____ |
| 14. When the football game was over, the bleachers ware littered with pop bottles. | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | | |
| 15. Never accept anything from "the friendly strager." | _____ | _____ |
| 16. He lost his balance and fell from the scaffolding. | _____ | _____ |
| 17. The population explosion will probaly bring mass starvation in its wake. | _____ | _____ |
| 18. The pleasures of intellect last longer that the pleasures of sex. | _____ | _____ |
| 19. Be it ever so humble, there's no place like hone. | _____ | _____ |
| 20. The trouble with lectures is that the listener's mind words faster than the speaker can talk. | _____ | _____ |
| 21. I can't possible go to the movies tonight. | _____ | _____ |
| 22. Research into methods of teaching composition reveals that there is no one universally successful method of instruction. | _____ | _____ |
| 23. Spelling becomes more understandable when you learn to tell the differents between stressed and unstressed syllables. | _____ | _____ |
| 24. "Privilege" is among the forty words most commonly misspelled by college students. | _____ | _____ |

25. An increased sense of doubt may lead to a decreased number spelling errors. _____

Answers

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. shoulder | 6. instruct <u>ion</u> | 11. thr <u>ough</u> | 16. (C) | 21. possib <u>ly</u> |
| 2. "that" is repeate <u>d</u> | 7. effect <u>on</u> | 12. <u>the</u> tape recorder | 17. probab <u>ly</u> | 22. (C) |
| 3. test <u>s</u> | 8. (C) | 13. (C) | 18. than <u>g</u> | 23. differenc <u>e</u> |
| 4. soul <u>s</u> | 9. (C) | 14. we <u>re</u> | 19. hom <u>e</u> | 24. misspell <u>ed</u> |
| 5. fr <u>om</u> | 10. think <u>g</u> | 15. stran <u>ger</u> | 20. work <u>s</u> | 25. number <u>of</u> |

PROOFREADING EXERCISE #4

Directions: In the following paragraph, locate, circle and correct the spelling errors you find. The corrected version is below.

Being the cheif historian in a large organization is a real challenge. The recuests to compile the momentos collected throughout the year are usualy made very late in the year, but amazingly enough, those who make these incredable demands expect nothing less then perfeccion. After the peices of "scraps" are collected for a scrapbook, their is no one around to help out. However, those who didnt work are the first to pass judgement of the final product. The quickest way known to man to become knowledgeable about the art of cutting and glueing is to become a historian.

ANSWERS:

Being the **chief** historian in a large organization is a real challenge. The **requests** to compile the **mementos** collected throughout the year are **usually** made very late in the year, but amazingly enough, those who make these **incredible** demands expect nothing less **than perfection**. After the **pieces** of "scraps" are collected for a scrapbook, **there** is no one around to help out. However, those who **didn't** work are the first to pass **judgment on** the final product. The quickest way known to man to become knowledgeable about the art of cutting and **gluing** is to become a historian.

WRITING SAMPLE EVALUATION GUIDE

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

Please rate the essay using the following scale (1 = lowest, 6 = highest):

CONTENT:

The essay answers/addresses the questions asked in the topic. 1 2 3 4 5 6

The writer uses details and examples as support. 1 2 3 4 5 6

The writer generalizes from the examples. 1 2 3 4 5 6

ORGANIZATION:

The introduction tells what is coming. 1 2 3 4 5 6

The organization is easy to follow. 1 2 3 4 5 6

The paragraphs are coherent. 1 2 3 4 5 6

The conclusion is appropriate. 1 2 3 4 5 6

STYLE:

Sentences are varied. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Word choices are accurate and appropriate. 1 2 3 4 5 6

CORRECTNESS:

Grammar is standard:

Verb Tense 1 2 3 4 5 6

Subject-Verb Agreement 1 2 3 4 5 6

Pronoun Case 1 2 3 4 5 6

Pronoun Reference. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Spelling is standard. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Sentences are complete and correct (no fragments, run-ons, comma splices). 1 2 3 4 5 6

AVERAGE: _____

INTERPRETATION OF SCORES:

Marks in the 1-2 range indicate considerable work is needed.

Marks in the 3-4 range are still remedial.

Marks in the 5-6 range indicate college-level writing skills.

EVALUATOR'S SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____

Revised: Spring 2005

Created by Lisa Cradit, Spring 1997

STUDENT LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTER (SLAC)

Texas State University-San Marcos