



# Proofreading your work

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## Introduction

Proofreading involves checking what you have written to make sure that you have not made any mistakes. It is essential to proofread your work several times before you submit it. Do not rely on the spell checking and grammar functions in your computer. For example, a spell checker cannot distinguish 'homophones' (words that sound the same but have different meanings - such as, 'there' and 'their').

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## Proofreading strategies

<b>Focus on different types of mistake</b>	One of the reasons that students miss mistakes when proofreading is because they try to focus on too many things at once. Proofreading is more effective when you focus on specific types of error. Read your assignment several times, looking for different types of mistake. Different areas you may want to focus on when proofreading include spelling, grammar, use of evidence, flow, structure and referencing.
<b>Make sure you are not tired</b>	Effective proofreading will require concentration. You will miss mistakes if you try to proofread when you are tired.
<b>Read text out of order</b>	A good way of checking your grammar and spelling is to read the assignment out of order. For example, start with page 4 then 3 then 2 then 1.
<b>Check your apostrophes</b>	A lot of people get confused about the use of apostrophes. If you are unsure of the rules look these up.
<b>Manage your time</b>	Make sure you leave sufficient time before the hand in date, to have a break from the assignment once you have written it in its final version. Once you have finished it, put the assignment away somewhere and try to allow at least forty-eight hours before you look at it again.

<b>Read your work out loud</b>	Read an assignment out loud to 'hear' where things do not sound right. This is more effective than just relying on sight alone.
<b>Double check unusual spellings and dates</b>	There might be words in your assignment that you have not spelt before (for example, subject specific terminology or author surnames). Double check that these spellings. In many cases Microsoft Word will indicate that they are mistakes which might mean that you overlook them. Likewise, double check dates are correct.
<b>Use colour</b>	It can be useful to use the Microsoft Word highlighter to remind yourself which parts of your assignment still require attention. For instance, highlighting all of your in text references will make it easier to find them when proofreading. It is useful to use different colours to represent different types of issue.
<b>Create a common mistake list</b>	<p>After you have submitted some assignments and received your feedback you might start to see that there are patterns in the type of mistakes that you are making.</p> <p>For example, there might be issues associated with tense or referencing. Based on your feedback you can create a list of mistakes that you commonly make. This will help you to identify areas that you need to focus upon when proofreading a future assignment.</p>
<b>Get a second opinion</b>	It can be helpful to get a second opinion about how the assignment is written. However, do not ask classmates to proofread your assignments as this could lead to accidental collusion.
<b>Change the document appearance</b>	Changing the appearance of a document can make your work appear unfamiliar and easier to check. However, do not forget to change formatting back to normal before you submit.
<b>Use find</b>	Using the 'find' function in Word can be helpful in terms of double checking if specific words or phrases are used correctly (such as their / there / they're)

<b>Find what works for you</b>	Inevitably, you will find some strategies more useful than others. Once you have found strategies that work for you stick with them.
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### Find out more

Check out the **Academic and Assignment Writing** section of the Study Hub: Online.



### Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:

**[lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub](http://lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub)**

