

Working around proofreading

Proof-reading techniques.

Proof-reading is best left until at least a day or more after the material has been written; it is difficult to spot your own errors while the material is fresh in your mind.

Most students use a computer spellchecker for proofing their work. However, many do not know how to get the best from the grammar checker provided with some word-processing programmes. The one included in Microsoft Word can be customised to check only basic grammatical errors (e.g. punctuation and capital letters) if necessary. Alternatively, it can be set up to carry out a more detailed check of grammar and writing style. If you are not sure how best to use the grammar checker, find out.

An obvious alternative to proofing your own work is to ask someone else to read through it for you – and this is fine, as long as the content remains unchanged.

If you have difficulty controlling the length of your sentences, or if you are inclined to write run-on sentences (sentences joined with a comma, instead of separated with a full stop), the following may be of use:

Highlight one sentence at a time, from capital letter to full-stop. Read that sentence to yourself (out loud, if possible).

Does it make sense?

If you have linked two ideas together to form a longer sentence, try splitting it into two parts. If the two parts can each be read as a complete sentence, then they should not be joined with a comma. Either separate them with a full stop (period) or try using a joining word such as 'and' or 'but' to link them together.

Tip for users of Microsoft Word. If you hold down the 'Ctrl' key and click anywhere in a sentence, all of that sentence will be selected. This also works if you are using the text Highlighter Tool. Repeat the 'Ctrl' click to remove the highlighting.

There are additional software programmes that can help with proofreading.

TextHelp Read & Write adds speech output, word prediction and enhanced spellcheck to most Windows programs.

There are also simpler programmes that just read on-screen text out loud. Again this can help you to tell if your writing 'sounds' right.

Links to further information about software:

TextHelp

<http://www.texthelp.com/>

Dyslexic.com

<http://www.dyslexic.com/products.asp>

MKC Learning

<http://www.mkclearning.co.uk/>