Tips for Proofreading and Editing Your Content

What's the best way to proofread and edit your content?

It's great to be able to hire an editor and have a fresh set of eyes to look at your work, but that's usually not possible. Or it may not be practical.

It's hard to be objective about your own work and to see your errors.

Here are some tips you can use to improve the quality of your work.

Step away from the document.

When editing a document, it's beneficial to take a break. Dr. Clare Lynch from Doris & Bertie says: "The brain naturally fills in the gaps and reads what it thinks is there—not what actually is there. So you need to trick your brain into seeing the document as if someone else had written it. So if you can, leave it overnight and come back to it with fresh eyes." If you can't do that, even stepping away for 30 minutes can be beneficial. This helps to clear your head and to give you a fresh perspective.

Enlist another set of eyes.

Even if you can't afford an editor, you can have someone else read your document. If your work is intended for a specific audience, have someone from that group read your document. If they have trouble understanding parts of your document, that means you need to make some changes This doesn't always work because some people may just give you positive feedback.

Read your writing aloud.

You'll be surprised by the number of errors you'll catch when you read your document aloud. When you hear each word spoken individually, you're more likely to see hard-to-find typos. These could be incorrect word endings or missing words. Microsoft 365 has a feature which allows the content to be read aloud.

TIP FOR WRITING AND EDITING

Try to write and edit during those times of the day when you'll be the most alert.

Are you a morning person? Or a night owl?

Pay attention to your main audience.

If it's Canadian, use the Canadian spelling of words. If it's American, then use the American spelling. This website may be helpful with figuring out your correct spelling choices. Or check out this website from Ryerson University Pressbooks.

Read the document slowly.

Slow is the secret to fast. The secret to efficiently proofreading your work is to take your time and to be methodical. This is not the time for speed reading. Some of those typos can drastically change the meaning of a sentence.

Break up long sentences.

See if some of those longer sentences can be reworded or can be broken up into shorter sentences. Remember that some long sentences are okay, but short sentences keep the reader alert.

Create your own style sheet.

Know your weaknesses. We all have grammar and style hang-ups—concepts we look up again and again. Keep a running list of these hang-ups and their solutions. Your style sheet could include anything unique to you that you want to remember. This could include a specific description of recipe ingredients (look for more information in the session 4 handout), the preferred spelling of certain words, and words that you often misspell. This is even more important if you collaborate with someone else so you can ensure consistency.

Search for and destroy any extra words—those words you use out of habit which add nothing to your writing.

You could make a list of those common offenders and add them to your style sheet. Examine your writing and see if those words can be removed without altering your intended meaning. Here are some examples: very, just, really, so, started, to.

Figure out if you can spot errors better on the screen or on a paper copy.

If you prefer a paper copy, use a red pen to mark your changes. This will be easier to see. If a red pen gives you a bad feeling (maybe an experience from school), then use a purple pen or another colour. If you're editing on paper, increase the font size, double space lines, and

increase margin width before printing the document. These adjustments will give you more room to make your changes.

Confirm URLs are correct.

Ensure that you have checked any URLs to make sure they're working and they're correct. This would include any links from your sales page.

Use the editor in Word for Microsoft 365 (Spelling & Grammar Check).

Check out this tutorial for further instructions. Software tools can spot some of those spelling and grammar errors. Grammarly has both a free and paid online writing assistant. (I haven't used the paid version.) Don't expect any software tools to catch all your errors. Sometimes the recommendations will be good and sometimes they won't.

Proofread for spelling.

Check for basic typos. Common typos include teh for the and htis for this. A spellchecker should catch these typos because the resulting letter strings don't form words.

But there are common typos that spellcheck might not pick up because they create words that do exist: form for from, lean for learn, exited for excited, and pubic for public.

Two other mistakes that many writers are susceptible to are repeating words and leaving words out.

I
love
Paris in the
the springtime

Did you spot the repeated word?

Look at this example from Today: "Many American who've been told they have a penicillin allergy may been diagnosed."

Mistakes like the above are common and easy to make. When you're reviewing your writing, force yourself to read word for word, so you read what's there, not what your brain is predicting is there.

You could also check the beginnings and endings of lines.

Check out this website if you're interested in the 100 Most Often Misspelled Words in English.

Make sure the reader knows who you are.

Your first and last names should be shown in the document. If holistic is part of your title, make sure that's included. Don't call yourself a nutritionist if you're a holistic nutritionist.

Make sure that your content is within your scope of practice.

Many words may be outside your scope of practice. Some examples could include heal, cure, and diagnose. Unless these words are within your scope or practice, you'll need to replace them.

Remember that "may" is a great word to use—may prevent.

Also check to make sure that you haven't guaranteed any results. Only clients can be responsible for their results.

Make sure the names of any people you refer to are spelled correctly.

This would include the names of any people supplying testimonials or any practitioners you refer to.

Make sure your times and dates are correct.

Double-check your dates and times to make sure they are correct and consistent. Look at the calendar to confirm that the day matches the date. Make sure you're looking at the correct month. Also ensure that your time zones are correct—meaning that if you refer to more than one time zone, the times are correct for each time zone.

Don't overdo the punctuation.

Avoid using a lot of exclamation marks or pairing them with question marks to tell the reader something is important.

Make sure that you supplied any particulars you referred to.

If you tell the reader to respond to you via email, make sure that your email address is included. If a Zoom link is needed, make sure it's included.

If you're sending an email with attachments, make sure those documents are attached.

Does your program provide ongoing access, or is it for a limited time?

If your program has a money-back option, provide any necessary details.

Trim the deadwood. Get rid of the redundancies unless they add value to your content.

Did you check for words or phrases that are redundant or unnecessary?

Check for inconsistencies.

Make sure you have eliminated any inconsistencies. Here are some examples to watch for.

You refer to 4 points in an article, but you only include 3.

You refer to a website but don't include the URL.

Your style of capitalization changes from one heading to the next. Choose a style and stick with it.

You forget to pay attention to parallel structure in your sentences or in your bullet points.

Subject your work to the "final glance" test.

Have you ever spotted an error in your writing at the precise moment you click send? At the precise moment your brain has stopped seeking out errors?

You can print your document out just before you're ready to send it. Do the "final glance" test. You might pick up a glaring typo that you previously missed.

Don't let all these tips stop you from writing.

Decide what content needs to be the most polished and spend more time editing that.