

Proofreader's Checklist

Proofreading is a later stage of revision during the writing process. You should proofread a text that you feel has been revised thoroughly and is nearly ready to be turned in. This checklist helps you to double check that you have covered all of your bases as you work towards a final draft of a text.

1. Have I followed the requirements?

Make sure you revisit the assignment prompt or any other requirements before submitting your text. Ask yourself the following questions:

- a. Did I understand the assignment? If you have any misgivings about whether or not you understand what the assignment is asking you to do, be sure to ask your instructor and/or a TA.
- b. Have you stayed on topic? As you reread your paper, make sure you are incorporating information and ideas that are relevant to the topic and the assignment. Cut extraneous information and/or expand upon relevant points.
- c. Have you followed the formatting requirements?
 - i. If the paper is to be presented in MLA style, make sure you check a style guide to ensure you've adhered to that guide. Make similar checks if your text is to be formatted according to APA style guidelines, Chicago style, or another set of instructions as given by your instructor.
 - ii. If the instructor designates specific requirements about length, margin formatting, font choices and sizes, check to make sure you're adhering to these directions.

2. Have I checked organization?

Make sure your text has the necessary textual elements in accordance with the genre in which you are writing and/or the assignment prompt you have been given. As a general guide, you might check if your text includes the following:

- a. Does your text include an introduction?
- b. Does your text have an argument that is realized through a thesis statement, forecasting statements, or similar items?
- c. Is your argument well developed through the body of your text?
 - i. Do you use topic sentences in each paragraph to signal to the reader what idea is being discussed.
 - ii. Do you
- d. Does your text include a conclusion?
 - i. Does that conclusion introduce new information? If so, is that information necessary or can it be cut? If it is necessary, where might you integrate it in the body of your paper?
 - ii. Does the conclusion summarize your main points and provide clear takeaway ideas for your audience?

3. Have I considered audience issues?

Remember to tailor your text to the audience or readers whom you imagine will encounter it. This can include the instructor who may be reading your paper but also can include other

- a. Have I included background information that the audience may need to understand the topic and my argument?
- b. Are my style choices, including diction, tone, and syntax, appropriate for this audience?
 - i. Think about how formal your language is. Is that level of formality appropriate to the occasion and for your intended audience?



- ii. Are you using contractions? Are they acceptable?
- iii. Are you using first or second person pronouns? Are they acceptable?

4. Have I edited for style?

- a. Is your sentence style varied?
 - i. Try using many different types of sentences in your writing.
 - 1. Simple sentences = 1 independent clause.
 - a. The sky is blue.
 - 2. Compound sentences = 2 independent clauses.
 - a. The sky is blue, but it is also cloudy.
 - 3. Complex sentences = dependent clause(s) + 1 independent clause.
 - a. Because the sky is cloudy, I think it may rain later.
 - 4. Compound-complex sentences = 2 independent clauses + dependent clause(s).
 - a. Although the sky is cloudy, I will spend time outside today, and we will have a picnic at the park.
- b. Do your sentences begin in different ways or do you repeat phrases?
 - i. If all of your sentences begin with the subject, try changing it up with some variations, including: transitional words; prepositional phrases; dependent clauses.
- c. Are your word choices (diction) varied?
 - i. Watch for repetitious uses of language. If you tend to overuse one word, check a thesaurus for synonyms to provide you other options.
- d. Are you using strong verbs and avoiding an overreliance on “to be” verbs?
 - i. “To be” verbs can often be replaced with a stronger verb that requires fewer words to communicate the same idea.
 - 1. For instance: *Then we were there.* Vs. *Then we arrived.*
- e. Are you using active voice?
 - i. In passive voice, the subject of the sentence is displaced by other phrases so that the sentence reads as if the action is happening to the subject. For example: *Chess is played by Judy.*
 - ii. Revising sentences from passive voice to active voice can make them easier to read and comprehend. For instance: *Judy played chess.*
- f. Are you avoiding using pronouns with vague referents and/or overusing “there” or “it”?
 - i. The pronouns “there” and “it” are often followed by “to be” verbs that create unnecessary wordiness that delays the subject of the sentence. For example: *There are few rabbits that fly.* Vs. *Few rabbits fly.*

5. Have I proofread for grammar?

Check for mistakes that you commonly make and/or grammar issues that you have struggled with. The Writing Center provides handouts on many of these and other grammar topics. (Visit <http://cstw.osu.edu/writing-center/handouts>)

- a. Mistakes to watch for include:
 - i. Missing or extra commas
 - ii. Sentence fragments
 - iii. Run-on sentences
 - iv. Parallelism
 - v. Subject-verb agreement
 - vi. Pronoun-antecedent agreement
 - vii. “Which” Vs. “That”

For more help and assistance, visit the CSTW Writing Center. <http://cstw.osu.edu>