



THE WRITING CENTER

Unistrukture, 1st floor

232-6567

<http://www.bryant.edu/ace>

Call ahead for an appointment with a student Writing Consultant or a professional Writing Specialist.
Drop-ins also welcome and accommodated whenever possible.

Proofreading, Editing and Revising

The following are some tips to remember once you are ready to start proofreading your draft so that you can edit and/revise it. Edit means to make corrections; revise means to change aspects of the paper that you have determined need more significant editing.

Proofreading for Grammar, Punctuation and Clarity

1. **MAKE A LIST OF YOUR MOST COMMON WRITING MISTAKES.** For example, if you always use the wrong form of “there,” “they’re” and “their,” or “affect” and “effect,” be sure to check specifically for those words. Or, if you have typical punctuation errors that your instructors always point out, proofread your paper with those mistakes in mind. Read through the paper once for each of your common mistakes, so that you can focus on one at a time.
2. **READ THE PAPER ALOUD.** By reading the paper aloud, you may hear errors or awkward phrases. Very often your ears will pick up grammar mistakes that your eyes don’t. Sometimes as the words come out of our mouths, we realize that this is not the way we would speak them, so they may need to be edited. Be sure not to rush through the reading; you will miss some mistakes by correcting them in your mind.
3. **HAVE SOMEONE ELSE READ THE PAPER ALOUD TO YOU.** You are even more likely to hear grammatical errors and awkward phrasing when listening to your paper being read to you. Writing Consultants and Writing Specialists can help with this.
4. **READ THE PAPER BACKWARDS.** Read the last sentence first (left to right as usual). Then read the second to last sentence, etc. This breaks up the flow of the paper so you aren’t thinking about whether the sentence works in the context of the paper, but about whether it is a grammatically correct, clear and appropriately punctuated sentence.
5. **CHECK FOR SENTENCE FRAGMENTS.** Does the sentence have a subject? Does the sentence have a complete verb? If the sentence begins with a subordinate clause, is there a main clause in the same sentence?
6. **CHECK PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AND SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENTS.** Because pronouns usually replace or refer to other nouns, they must match those nouns in number and gender. The noun that the pronoun replaces is called the antecedent. The pronoun and its antecedent must match. Singular subjects need singular verbs; plural subjects need plural verbs.

7. USE THE ACTIVE RATHER THAN THE PASSIVE VOICE WHENEVER POSSIBLE. Put the actor in the subject position, not the object position.
8. CHECK YOUR TENSES. Moving from present tense to past tense or vice versa can be confusing to the reader so be sure your tenses match when appropriate. When you quote directly from a text or allude to the events in a story (as in a brief plot summary), you should use the literary present. This means to write about written works as if the events in them are happening now, even if the authors are long dead. When you quote an author, you should use the literary present. When you write about fiction, you should use the literary present.

Proofreading for Thesis, Organization and Adherence to the Assignment

1. CHECK THE THESIS STATEMENT. Does it accurately state your main idea? Is it supported by the paper? Does it need to be changed in any way?
2. MAKE SURE THE THESIS STATEMENT INDICATES WHAT TYPE OF PAPER IT IS. There are basically four kinds of thesis statements:
 - 1) **General** – readers will expect your conclusions or your perspective.
 - 2) **Informative** – readers will expect to learn something.
 - 3) **Argumentative** – readers will expect to find your opinion and possibly other views as well.
 - 4) **Academic** – readers will expect you to state your specific conclusion and a plan to support it with academic research.
3. CHECK THE ORGANIZATION. Go through the entire paper, and write in the margin beside each paragraph (or on a separate sheet) what the main point of the paragraph is. Reorganize until the flow is logical and interesting. Revise or delete paragraphs that do not connect back to the thesis.
4. CHECK THE TOPIC SENTENCES. Look at the first sentence of each paragraph. Does the topic sentence accurately reflect the content of the entire paragraph? Ask yourself how each topic sentence and paragraph relates to your thesis statement. If it is unclear how it relates, then you need to tweak or get rid of the paragraph.
5. CHECK THE ASSIGNMENT. A college-level paper assignment can be one sentence or an entire page. It can include specific requirements – like how many sources to use or whether or not to include your own opinion. It can offer various prompts/topics/questions to choose from. It may require strict adherence to MLA or APA citation and/or formatting. It may ask for you to provide a summary of a text or idea, or it may explicitly state that it should not be a summary. Refer back to the assignment often as you proceed through the writing process to ensure that you are meeting the requirements and approaching the topic from the desired perspective.