

Quick Guide : Proofreading

Proofreading is the final, key, stage of writing. You will have spent time planing, writing and re-writing your document so make sure you also invest he time in proofreading. A silly spelling error or missing apostrophe could change the meaning of your message and it will definately give the wrong impression of you an you firm. Use the ten tip's blow to help you proof-read letters', reports, documents and even e-mails to make sure you dont have the mistakes that youv'e noticed in this paragraph!!

1. Be methodical when proofreading. When you finish a document run spell check, print it off and leave for as long as possible before proofreading.
2. Proofread from a hard copy, not just from the computer screen.
3. Avoid distractions. Try to proofread in a quiet environment, with no disturbances such as phone, conversation, background chatter and so on.
4. Use a coloured pen for alterations, never a pencil.
5. Proofread for a maximum of 20 minutes at a time. When proofreading long documents read in stages to maintain concentration.
6. Read from the top. Read everything and double check dates, times, names, telephone numbers. Be very careful if cutting and pasting material into a document that you have changed names and other details from the previous document.
7. Read aloud or at least move your lips whilst reading. By saying, or forming the words, you will hear, as well as see, spelling mistakes, faulty sentence construction, bad grammar and poor punctuation. It will also slow you down and therefore help you proofread more accurately.
8. Check all titles, headings, and sub-headings. Check numbering systems, tables, cross references, covers, spines and that the contents/index pages agree with headings in documents. Check that it conforms to your house style, if you have one.
9. Proofread a document at least three times looking for different errors each time. For example, the first time look for spellings, grammar and punctuation; the second time look for inconsistencies in style and formatting; and the third time see if it all makes sense. Leave time between the three checks if possible – you will spot more mistakes each time you read it.
10. If possible, get somebody else to do a final proofread. We can be blind to our own mistakes.

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