

Writing and Study Skills Services – Laurier Brantford
You've Written Your Essay – Now What?
Editing and Proofreading

Editing

Once you have finished writing your paper, there are still some important stages you will need to go through before you can hand it in. Editing is the stage that immediately follows the writing process; it involves going over what you have already written and revising it to make the essay into a more readable paper. During the editing stage, correct any grammatical and word choice errors and ensure that the same voice and tone is used throughout the paper. Below is a checklist that can help you get started in the editing process, it has been adapted from *Thinking it Through: A Practical Guide to Academic Essay Writing*.

Checklist: Editing Your Essay

Topic and Thesis

1. What is your essay about? Is your topic/thesis clear?
2. Does your essay make any promises to its readers? If so, are these promises kept?
3. Does everything in your paper relate to your topic/thesis and have you clearly identified how they relate?
4. Do you have plenty of quotations, references, accurate facts and examples to support your thesis and other statements in your essay?

Organization

1. How is your essay organized?
2. Do you indicate which ideas are of major importance and give these ideas proper emphasis?
3. Have you used transitions to show the relations between the points you make?

Voice

1. Have you maintained the same voice throughout the essay?
2. Is your writing overly formal or informal? Do you use “I,” “we,” and “one” appropriately?
3. Have you used the active voice as much as is suitable? Are your verbs expressive and strong?

Diction

1. Have you used language that is clear and easy to understand?
2. Is your language as concise as possible? Cut unnecessary words and clichéd expressions.
3. Have you avoided slang or jargon? Is your writing too informal?

Grammar

1. Consult previous marked essays to ensure that you don't repeat grammatical errors.

Proofreading

Proofreading and editing are two different stages in the writing process. When you have finished revising your paper and there are no more changes that you want to make to it, then it is time to proofread your work. You should print out a copy of your final draft and proofread the paper copy, making any necessary alterations with a pen or pencil. Proofreading on paper, as opposed to on the computer, allows you to take yourself out of the context of the "writing" stage and allows you to look at your paper as a potential reader might. When proofreading, you will be looking for any typographical or spelling errors that may have occurred during the writing process. Below is a checklist that is meant to aid you in the proofreading process; it has also been adapted from *Thinking it Through: A Practical Guide to Academic Essay Writing*.

Checklist: Proofreading Your Essay

1. Are your words spelled correctly?
 - It is important that you read your paper over and make sure that words are spelled correctly and that the proper words are being used. There are some words that have more than one way to spell them, like centre and center. Make sure that you choose one way of spelling and stick with it throughout your paper.
2. Are you using the right word?
 - Although the spell check function on your computer is a useful tool, it won't catch typographical errors that produced another proper word. For example, hear instead of here, there instead of their, etc. It's important to read your paper over to catch these kinds of mistakes.
3. Have you indicated which words and phrases in your text are titles?
 - The titles of books, journals, plays and films should either be underlined or printed in italics. It's best to check with the faculty member for whom you are writing and see which they prefer or consult the appropriate style guide. Quotation marks should be placed around the titles of chapters of books, articles, short stories and short poems.

General Tips for Editing and Proofreading

- READ OUT LOUD! Reading sentences that you are unsure about out loud helps you to detect whether or not the sentence is awkward.
- Have a friend look over your paper and provide you with feedback. It will give you a fresh perspective on what you have written and your friend might catch mistakes that you may have missed.
- Don't use words if you don't know their meaning. Using a word that you see commonly in your research might not be a good idea if you don't understand its meaning. Misusing a word could change what you are intending to say.

Work Cited:

Boyne, Martin et. al. *Thinking It Through: A Practical Guide To Academic Essay Writing*. 3rd ed. Peterborough: Trent University, 2005. Print.