



Proofreading v. Consulting

Many people come to the writing center knowing they have to fix something, but not quite sure what. But for a lot of people, what you need is easy: proofreading! And the good news is, you can learn to do that on your own. So how do you do that, and when do you need an appointment with a tutor?

Proofreading

What is it? Proofreading the final step of editing, when you reread your paper (or have someone else read your paper) for minor errors in spelling, grammar, word choice, and typing. This is when you often notice typos, forgotten words, and redundancies. It's different from revision, which is the step where you make more major changes to your paper in areas like organization and content, because your paper is all finished—you're just tidying it up.

How do I proofread on my own?

One great method is to have someone else read your paper for you—a friend or roommate might bring a fresh eye to notice minor errors. You can even hear some errors if one of you reads your paper aloud to the other.

If you're alone, we recommend three strategies, and you can choose the one you prefer:

1. Read your paper backwards, one sentence at a time. When you separate each sentence from its context this way, you can focus on mechanics rather than meaning.
2. Read your paper aloud to yourself, noting when you trip up or get confused. Those places might benefit from editing.
3. After you finish writing and revising, set your paper aside for a day or so (the longer the better!). Once you return to it, you'll be better able to catch little mistakes.

Consulting

When do I need an appointment with a tutor for proofreading?

When you're just learning how to proofread or are unfamiliar with the mechanics of grammar and punctuation, you might want to meet with a consultant to figure it out.

What if I need other kinds of help?

We're happy to help with all kinds of writing. Writing issues that affect the whole paper will affect your grade more than punctuation and grammar, so they're especially important to focus on.

Definitely come see us if:

- you don't understand your assignment.
- you can't figure out how to address your topic.
- you are having trouble with your thesis statement or main point.
- you aren't sure how to organize your ideas and information.
- you aren't sure you have fully supported your points.
- your peers or teacher expressed concerns about topic, organization, content, support, clarity, etc.

These and other general issues about paper writing are our specialty! We're also happy to help you with group papers and projects, study habits, note-taking, time-management strategies, and other study and learning issues.

How do I make an appointment?

Go to www.tacoma.washington.edu/tlc and follow the sign up for an appointment link.