**HBS Guide to Proofreading**

Proofreading is the final step in the writing and editing process. In this step, a writer is looking for errors such as misspelled words, incorrect punctuation, stylistic inconsistencies, and formatting.

Proofreading should be done *after* the final editing of a document. Ideally, some time should elapse between editing and proofreading, so the reader returns to the document with fresh eyes. The key to proofreading is to read what is *on* the page, not what the writer *meant* to write.

**Tips for Proofreading**

* Print a copy of the document and proofread the paper copy.
* Read the document out loud.
* Read the document from the end to the beginning (sentence by sentence).
* Read slowly.
* Read for one type of error at a time.
* Use a ruler or paper to help focus on one line at a time.
* Use a spell and grammar check program (see the list below).
* Ask someone else to read your paper.

**Common Errors to Look For**

* Word choice confusion: their/they’re/there; it’s vs its; weather/whether; than/then
* Punctuation errors
	+ Commas
	+ Apostrophes
	+ Hyphens, em and en dashes
	+ Quotation marks
* Capitalization errors
* Verb errors
	+ Subject-verb agreement
	+ Wordy verb forms
	+ Correct and consistent tenses
* Sentence structure errors
	+ Sentence fragments
	+ Comma splices
	+ Fused & run-on sentences
* Pronoun errors
	+ Agreement
	+ Clear referents
* Consistent use of
	+ Contractions
	+ Name/date/title style
	+ Numbers
* Conciseness
	+ Avoid cliches
	+ Avoid wordy verb forms
	+ Avoid redundancies
* Word Choice
	+ Jargon
	+ Vocabulary
	+ Acronyms

**Proofreading Programs & Extensions**

* Add grammar or spelling extension to Google docs
* Add grammar and spelling checker by Ginger to Chrome
* Use Microsoft Editor in Word
	+ Spelling
	+ Grammar Checker
	+ Read-Aloud
* Use a grammar and spell checker like Language Tool

Websites

* Ginger
* Grammarly
* PaperRater
* Typely
* Scribbr