



Here are some strategies that will help you proofread your essays:

- **Proofread more than once.** You'll find mistakes that you overlooked the first time you proofread your paper. Also, as you edit the content of your paper, new errors may come up in your paper.
- **Take a break before proofreading.** Wait several hours after you have printed out your essay to proofread it for the final time. Always proofread at least once with a hard copy.
- **Search for errors.** *Assume* that you have made unconscious errors and really look for them. Slow down your reading considerably and actually look at every word.
- **Read your essay out loud and read exactly what is on the page.** This will slow you down, and sometimes you can *hear* the difference between what you meant to write and what you actually wrote.
- **Proofread backwards.** Try starting with the last sentence of the paper and reading backwards to the first sentence. This can help you distance yourself from the content and meaning and focus on sentence-level errors.
- **Know your typical mistakes.** Before you proofread, look over any papers you've already gotten back corrected. Recall the errors you need to watch for. As you're writing *this* paper, take ten minutes to learn from the last one.
- **Look for one type of error per reading, if necessary.** For example, read once for subject/verb agreement, once for segment fragments, etc.
- **Look up anything you're not sure of.** Consult dictionaries, writing reference books, and grammar reference books. Guessing won't help you, but looking something up will help you learn for future reference.
- **Get a second opinion.** After you have proofread your essay on your own several times, have a friend, classmate, or coworker read your essay and CIRCLE (NOT CORRECT) THE SENTENCE with the error in it. Then see if you can identify and fix the problem. You'll learn more about your writing mistakes this way than by having someone else point out and correct your errors for you.
- **Proofread your final copy several times.** There is no point in proofreading a rough draft of your paper if you forget to proofread your final draft. Feel free to write on a "final" draft. It's not really FINAL until you turn it in.
- **Use "spell check."** There is no reason for spelling errors and typos in college-level essays. However, don't rely on spell check to find all of your spelling mistakes and errors, since the computer can overlook many errors.

*Adapted from *Fog City Fundamentals: A Proofreading Skills Book (4th Edition)*, SFSU English Department