



Division of  
Academic Enhancement  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



**PLaTO**  
Peer Learning and Teaching Others

## **General Tips on Proofreading**

*How to better read your own paper.*



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What is proofreading? Proofreading is the final step in the writing process. It is used to catch mistakes and errors in a writer's grammar. This may include the overuse of the passive voice, incomplete sentences (i.e. comma splices), or incorrect punctuation. Please see below for how you can best approach the proofreading process when writing a paper or assignment.

*Note, there is a difference in revising your draft and proofreading. If you notice your paper has sentence fragments, organizational issues, and/or is overall weak, please refer to the "Revising Your Draft" section.*

Here are 7 practicals you can do.

### 1. If you can: take time!

- If your paper is not due within the next 5 minutes (and hopefully it isn't), give yourself time from revising your draft to proofreading. Allowing time between these two stages will help your brain approach your paper with a fresh look and higher energy. You will be able to notice mistakes better!
- We suggest: take 1 to 2 hours away for a paper that is due the next day. Feel free to take a whole day or two if your paper is due in the later future.

### 2. Print out your paper

- Printing out your paper allows you to catch mistakes you might gloss over on the screen
- If you do not have the resources or time to print out your paper: we suggest copying your paper into another document and breaking up the paper by pressing "enter" multiple times in between paragraphs. This will allow you to focus on one bulk of writing at a time

### 3. READ YOUR PAPER OUT LOUD and SLOWLY!

- We cannot stress this enough. Read your paper out loud and slowly! You will be surprised at what you will catch while reading your work out loud. This is because reading out loud requires different parts of your brain than reading in your head. Engaging your ears in the proofreading process is crucial.

### 4. Look for contractions and apostrophes



- In scholarly writing it is important to avoid contractions. Instead spell out these words. Common contractions are: *don't, isn't, wasn't, they're, aren't, won't, it's*.
  - Change to: *do not, is not, was not, they are, are not, would not/will not, it is*.

### 5. Pay attention to your punctuation

- While reading out loud, notice if there needs to be a comma to break phrases up or if there are too many commas. Read your paper slowly and make sure to pause where there should be pauses. This will help tremendously!
- Make sure each sentence is properly punctuated. (For more help on punctuation, refer to the “Punctuation” guide)

### 6. Watch out for homonyms

- Homonyms are words that have the same spelling but different meanings or words that sound the same but have different meanings!
- Common ones: *accept/ except, affect/effect, loose/lose, hear/here, their/there, knew/new, know/no*.

### 7. Have someone else read your paper

- If you can, have someone else read your paper. Outside opinion is often invaluable!