

Reading Proofs

Proof reading is a final proofing of the manuscript, usually focused on cleaning up any typographical errors before the manuscript is typeset. It is the process of reading composed copy in order to identify and correct errors. It also involves verifying that text has been entered correctly, as well as looking for spelling and punctuation errors. Proofreading is not an innate ability; it is an acquired skill.

Tips for successful proofreading:

- Cultivate a healthy sense of doubt. If there are types of errors you know you tend to make, double check for those.
- Read very slowly. If possible, read out loud. Read one word at a time.
- Read what is actually on the page, not what you think is there. (This is the most difficult sub-skill to acquire, particularly if you wrote what you are reading).
- Proofread more than once. If possible, work with someone else.

In proofreading, you can take nothing for granted, because unconscious mistakes are so easy to make. It helps to read out loud, because 1) you are forced to slow down and 2) you hear what you are reading as well as seeing it, so you are using two senses. It is often possible to hear a mistake, such as an omitted or repeated word that you have not seen.

Professional editors proofread as many as ten times. Publishing houses hire teams of readers to work in pairs, out loud. And still errors occur.

Remember that it is twice as hard to detect mistakes in your own work as in someone else's!

General tips for Proofing and Editing

- Read it out loud and also silently.
- Read it backwards to focus on the spelling of words.
- Read it upside down to focus on typology.
- Use a spell checker and grammar checker as a first screening, but don't depend on them.
- Have others read it.

- Read it slowly.
- Use a screen (a blank sheet of paper to cover the material not yet proofed).
- Point with your finger to read one word at a time.
- Don't proof for every type of mistake at once—do one proof for spelling, another for missing/additional spaces, consistency of word usage, font sizes, etc.
- Print it out and read it.
- Read down columns in a table, even if you're supposed to read across the table to use the information. Columns may be easier to deal with than rows.
- Use editor's flags. Put #s in the document where reviewers need to pay special attention, or next to items that need to be double-checked before the final proof print. Do a final search for all # flags and remove them.
- Give a copy of the document to another person and keep a copy yourself. Take turns reading it out loud to each other. While one of you reads, the other one follows along to catch any errors and awkward-sounding phrases. This method also works well when proofing numbers and codes.
- First, proof the body of the text. Then go back and proof the headings. Headings are prone to error because copy editors often don't focus on them.
- Double check fonts that are unusual (italic, bold, or otherwise different).
- Carefully read type in very tiny font.
- Be careful that your eyes don't skip from one error to the next obvious error, missing subtle errors in between.
- Double check proper names.
- Double-check little words: "or," "of," "it," and "is" are often interchanged. Double check boilerplate text, like the company letterhead. Just because it's frequently used doesn't mean it's been carefully checked.
- Double check whenever you're sure something is right-certainty is dangerous.
- Closely review page numbers and other footer/header material for accuracy and correct order.

Preparation to Proof or Edit

- Write at the end of the day; edit first thing in the morning.

- Listen to music or chew gum. Proofing can be boring business and it doesn't require much critical thinking, though it does require extreme
- focus and concentration. Anything that can relieve your mind of some of the pressure, while allowing you to still keep focused, is a benefit.
- Don't use fluorescent lighting when proofing. The flicker rate is actually slower than standard lighting. Your eyes can't pick up inconsistencies as easily under fluorescent lighting.
- Spend a half-hour a month reviewing grammar rules.
- Read something else between edits. This helps clear your head of what you expect to read and allows you to read what really is on the page.
- Make a list of things to watch for—a kind of "to do" list—as you edit.

As soon as editing of a copy is done, the first symbol used is for paragraph indentation.

Even if every paragraph is indented, one should mark this symbol on every paragraph. This would help the typesetter to know that you want paragraph to begin at that spot.

Slug: a news item or story may run into several paragraphs and also exceed one page. If running into pages, a news story has to be kept track of from amongst various stories, and chronologically arranged. Hence, these paras, in a page, are divided into two or three parts. Then, these parts are 'slugged' and numbered, i.e. given a label, which identifies that story for that particular day, and helps the editor on duty to, bring different parts together. Slug is an identification mark or tag. It is often the key word in a story and is written on top left or right of a page.