

Editing Writing: Four Common Errors

How to Proofread:

Proofreading requires re-reading. You need to read each and every sentence you have written to make sure you have not made errors that you have the ability to easily correct. These errors in proofreading are more frequently made than you may realize.

The most effective way to proofread is to start at the end of your essay and read one sentence at a time, from the last sentence all the way to the beginning. Reading aloud will help you catch errors. Sometimes asking someone else to read your paper aloud can help you catch errors, too.

After reading your essay from the end, one sentence at a time, looking for errors you can find on your own, go through your essay *again* to address the issues raised here.

1. **Titles:** Essays with titles are always better than essays without titles. A title suggests to readers the issue you're addressing, and it definitely should engage readers! "Introduction" is not an acceptable title, nor is re-typing the name of the unit. A title should always be centered, but not underlined, put in quotes, or otherwise highlighted. The first letter of each major word should be capitalized. Incorrect: "My best year in high school". Correct: "My Unlikely Sophomore Success"
2. **Meaningless phrases and words.** As you re-read your essay for the final time, look to cut any phrases or words that are filler. The phrases listed below are unnecessary and should be cut; can you think of others?

In conclusion...
I think that...

In my opinion...
It seems that...

Do not write "I feel," unless you are talking about an emotion, as in "I felt angry." "I feel that smoking in schools should be allowed" is wrong. It should be, "I think smoking in schools should be allowed," or even, "Smoking in schools should be allowed." Using "feel" in place of "think" is a bad habit that you can break. Cross out these unnecessary phrases.

3. **Talking words.** Be careful about using talking words like, *well*, *so*, and *then*. *So* and *then* can be used to move action along, but when you use any of these three words just to warm up, you're using them ineffectively. For example, "So, my family has always been proud to be Italian-American" the *so* is unnecessary. Similarly, in "Well, so then we all got back into the car and returned to Montclair" *Well* and *so* are unnecessary.
4. **Numbers.** Here is an easy one, and although it may seem like a silly rule to some readers, it's a convention that many teachers value. Spell out numbers of one or two words or those that begin a sentence. For example, "I have 12 cards" is wrong. "I have twelve cards" is right. "150 kids got on the bus" is wrong. "One hundred fifty kids got on the bus" is correct.