The LSS 'How to' Series

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How to edit and proofread

The Learning Support Service
learningsupport@iadt.ie

http://www.iadt.ie/services/institute-student-services/learning-supports

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Proofreading and Editing Checklist

It can be tempting to skip this stage and just do a quick skim over before submitting your essay but try to make the effort. It can make the difference between a good paper and a great one. It's really just a matter of staying focused and following the right steps. Here are some tips to help you improve your writing:

1. Take a break before you start proofreading. You're guaranteed to miss things if you try to go straight from writing to rereading. Ideally leave it overnight and take a look in the morning.

2. Learn your own style. Is it better for you to write quickly and spend more time on rewriting, or to take your time and get it to the best possible state the first time? There are many possible approaches to writing essays — find the one that works for you.

3. Don't be afraid to ask for help — but you don't have to take everyone's advice, either. Use your own judgment and think for yourself. It's your writing — you get to make the final decision.

4. Don't be discouraged if you notice a lot of mistakes when you're doing your revision. That's why you're proofreading! Many successful writers do a quick first draft and then spend the bulk of the time improving that draft. It's a perfectly valid strategy.

Proofreading and Editing Checklist

Editing is where you check the focus, structure, flow and writing style of your paper as well as your references.

EDITING

- ☐ Check the assignment brief: have you answered the question and provided all the necessary information?

- ☐ Check the word count: are you within 10% of the assigned word count?

- ☐ Can you identify the main idea of each section?

- ☐ Can you identify the main point of each paragraph?

- ☐ Does each paragraph follow logically from the previous one?

- ☐ Are references formatted correctly?

- ☐ Does every reference connect with an entry on the Works Cited or Bibliography?

- ☐ Do all the titles (including the main title, chapter titles, and section titles) make sense and fit with their content?

Proofreading is where you carefully check spelling, grammar, syntax, and spacing.

PROOFREADING

- ☐ Run computer grammar checkers (Word, Grammarly, Ginger, and so on).

- ☐ Read the whole paper silently. Does anything look wrong?

- ☐ Read the whole paper out loud. Does anything sound wrong?

- ☐ Read the paper backwards –start from the last sentence and read each sentence until you get to the beginning.

- ☐ Turn the paper upside-down to check the typography and formatting.

- ☐ Use a sheet to cover the paper so that you can only look at one line at a time.

- ☐ Make a list of the errors you make most often and read through looking only for those.