

Accessibility and Equity in Proofreading

This deck is an output from a Collaborative Enhancement Project supported and funded by QAA Membership. The project is led by Loughborough University in partnership with Coventry University, University of Northampton, De Montfort University, University of Wolverhampton, Swansea University and Imperial College London.

Find out more about Collaborative Enhancement Projects on the QAA website.



STOP! DON'T JUST SUBMIT IT

20 Self-proofreading Insights and Tips

01 Plan it Remember the 6 Ps. Be organised; work backwards from the deadline	02 List it Make a list of your common errors and always check for them	03 Leave it Make your brain less familiar with what you have written. Return after a break	04 Hear it Read your work out loud. Let your ears hear the words	05 Record it Record yourself reading it. Listen to it later after a break
06 Confuse it Make your work look different to the 'unreal perfection' in your head	07 Morph it Change the font and/or its size to move the words positions on a screen	08 Hide it Concentrate your gaze; hide most of the page so you can't skip ahead	09 Reverse it Read the last sentence of each paragraph first and work backwards to the first	10 Print it The written word on paper looks different to the typeface on a screen
11 Split it Look for one thing at a time. Big stuff first; does it fit the brief? Then check the rest	12 Tabata it Read it for 15 minutes. Set an alarm. Wait 5 minutes. Second alarm. Repeat	13 Question it Go through and ask yourself, what key point is each section making - is it clear?	14 Reframe it Imagine you are the tutor marking it, is it what you are looking for?	15 Circle it Use your personalised checklist, seek out and circle your recurring mistakes
16 Check it Check you have changed all those hard spotted marked-up errors	17 Reread it Give yourself time to read it again after you have proofread it. Spot more errors	18 Scan it After checking and before submission, scan each page for structure and formatting	19 Loop it Check your feedback and feed it forward on to your list for next time	20 Search it Find university resources to help solve repeating errors

These resources were created by students for students.

Thank you to the student focus groups from Bangor, Coventry, Leicester Loughborough, Imperial, Manchester, Southampton, Warwick and Wolverhampton who were candid and honest with their comments and generous with their tips to share with others.

Without you, this study be would be much less meaningful.



1. Plan it

- Self-proofreading is hard, you need **time and space** to do it right.
- Be **strict** with yourself.
- You will not catch all errors the first time; plan **two cycles of review**.
- **Don't** let yourself **get distracted**.
- Proofread when **you are most focused**, whether it's early morning or late at night.
- Find an **enabling space**, where you don't disturb others and aren't disturbed yourself.
- **Close your email, switch off social media, hide your phone.**



2. List it

- As a **reviewer**, you pick up some things **easier than others**.
- **Tutors** often spot things you don't and note it in their **feedback**.
- Read all **feedback carefully**.
- Create a **living checklist** of what **you do wrong**.
- **Grow** your living checklist **year on year**.
- **Review** all your work **twice** using your checklist.
- **Seek out help** for recurring errors.
- If **frustrated by feedback**, **calm down first**, so you **engage** well.



3. Leave it

- Once the final paragraph is written, **mistakes need finding and fixing.**
- Errors are **harder to spot** as the work **gets more familiar.**
- Your **brain** has painted a picture and is **autocorrecting** for you.
- **Fade the picture** to see **mistakes.**
- Leaving it **for days is best**, but a **few hours can make a difference.**
- Build in **time** between **ending writing** and **before starting** self-proofreading.
- Move to a **separate proofreading place** to create a deliberate **break.**



4. Hear it

- **Badly worded** phrases are best spotted by **hearing them**.
- **Too many short** sentences make it sound **monotonous**
- **Overly long** sentences can **lose focus and clarity**.
- Read **out loud** to **spot them all**.
- Find the **right space** to read it to yourself.
- **Spell out syllables**, instead of whole words, to **slow you down**.
- Use **'text to speech'** software and **find a voice that works** for you.



5. Record it

- Sometimes **it takes time** to hear the mistakes.
- Combining **'leave it'** with **'hear it'** can help.
- Try different ways to **record the spoken word** and **play it back**.
- Record **yourself** or **text to speech**.
- Record it, **wait**, then listen to it.
- Listen **twice**, make notes **second time** through
- **Slow it down**, try 0.8 x normal speed to make you **listen to every word**.



6. Confuse it

- Weeks and months of work lead your brain to **paint a perfect picture** of what you meant to say, growing worse with **familiarity** and proximity to the deadline.
- Think of ways to **make yourself see the real picture.**
- **Time helps the picture fade**
- **Distorting the picture** so its not what you are expecting can also help you **see the errors again.**



7. Morph it

- After a while everything sits in the **same place on the page** and you skip over what is really there.
- **Changing where things are** on the page can make you **read the work differently.**
- Change **font type** and/or **font size** to **move the words on the page**
- Change **the margins**, the page from **portrait to landscape** or break the **page up into columns.**



8. Hide it

- Try **hiding most of the page** to make you focus on a **small section** so you really concentrate on what you are doing.
- **Use a solid ruler** (not a clear one) or a **folded piece of paper** to separate **a line at a time** and block out the other lines below.
- Change **the font colour** so most of the **page looks blank** e.g. white writing on a white background to separate a small section.
- Focus on **one paragraph at a time** by copying into another **document**.



9. Reverse it

- Familiarity with the words **extends beyond** where the words sit on the page, the picture extends to the **order of the words** as well.
- Starting **at the end**, read the words **back to front** to make you read every word.
- Start with **the very last line** of the last paragraph in your document.
- Starting from the bottom, copy **one paragraph at a time** into another document.



10. Print it

- **Printed documents** look **very different** to the words on the screen.
- **Formatting problems** are sometimes only visible once a document is printed, including poor position of diagrams on the page.
- Print a hard copy to allow **corrections to be written on** and **checked off** easily.
- Try using a **brightly coloured pen** to make corrections **easy to spot**.



11. Split it

- Trying to spot **all the errors** at once can mean you **miss more** than if the task is **broken down**.
- Take **most important things** first and grammar/spelling towards the end.
- For sustainability, **avoid multiple copies where possible**. **For example, print half size, and/or double sided**.
- Mark up using **multiple colours on one printed copy**.



12. Tabata it

- **Breaking down** time into short blocks can **help focus**.
- Try setting **alarms** to create **bursts of activity** and **rest breaks**.
- **Sound an alarm, work** for fifteen minutes. Use a **second alarm** to indicate the stop. Then **rest** for 5 minutes.
- **Repeat** the alarm – work, alarm - rest sequence till the review is complete.



13. Question it

- Does the work **fit the assessment brief**? Are all the expected sections there?
- Does every paragraph **have a point**? Is each point **clear**?
- Are all the **titles, figures and references formatted consistently**?
- Are any **units correct**? Have **any numbers been transposed**?



14. Reframe it

- Imagine you are **the member of staff marking** this work.
- Review the brief, **does your document meet the requirements?**
- **Highlight each important point** in the brief and **find the response** in the document.
- **Tick off** all of the assessment criteria. Address any **without a tick**.



15. Circle it

- Using your **living checklist**, circle **each point** in turn in a different colour.
- Circle the **end of sentences** to help **check punctuation** is correct.
- Sit **back at a distance** and look at punctuation circling. Is there a **good mixture** of simple, complex and compound **sentences**?
- Are all the references **consistently** cited.



16. Check it

- After identifying the errors, make sure you **correct them all**; you have worked hard to find them, you **don't want to miss any**.
- **Cross off each one** as you do it, so you know where you have got to if you have to **take a break** or **are disturbed**.
- Try **ticking them off** over the mark up or **using a highlighter pen**.
- **Save the mark ups** to add to the **living checklist** when you have more time.



17. Reread it

- **One circle** of checking typical picks up **50-70%** of your mistakes.
- Always **plan it** to fit in **two self-reviews** before the deadline.
- Starting again at the beginning is likely to find some more errors and/or **pick up on new issues** from the first set of changes.
- Remember **self-proofreading isn't easy and it needs time.**



18. Scan it

- Once you have **done all your changes**, make sure you can see a whole page at a time.
- Scan over **how it looks** before you submit it. Making changes can move titles and figures around and disrupt the appearance.
- This last check means that items such as **figures and their captions** are not separated from one another **or tables split over two pages**.
- **Look** at the **whole reference list** to ensure formatting is **consistent**.



19. Loop it

- **Build time** into the review process for **reviewing your feedback**.
- **Always remember to** feed forward on **to your living checklist** for next time.
- If you do not understand a point that is being made, **ask for help**, otherwise you will continue to make the same mistake.
- If you are not very happy with your feedback, **give yourself time to calm down before you try to engage with it or go for advice**.



20. Search it

- If you **cant make sense** of your feedback you will **keep making the same mistake**.
- **Search out help** from the University such as student services, the library or English language support
- Ask your **personal tutor** to **signpost you** if you don't know where to look.
- Put an alarm on your phone to **keep reminding you**, until you follow it up.

