

When it comes to editing, many think about running their paper through a spell checker and calling it “edited.” However, editing is a much more involved process that aims to make your work as neat and consistent as possible at the sentence level. Below is a list of areas to explore when editing but also be sure to strive for consistency in all areas.

Style

Make sure you are using the right words that most effectively convey the intended meaning. Check your point of view and make sure it is appropriately applied throughout your paper. Also, be sure your complex sentences are effective, and that you intermix them with simpler sentences as well. For more information, view our [Style Strategies](#) handout.

Punctuation

Review your sentences for errors such as comma splices, misplaced marks, use of quotation marks, apostrophes, etc.

Spelling

Identify words that may be misspelled. Sometimes, you may end up with a homonym or Word may autocorrect something you did not intend to change. Reading through for proper spelling is important to avoid confusion from your readers.

Reducing Wordiness

Check for common wordy phrases and edit them out of your paper. Look also for redundancy and shift it into a more appropriate, effective wording.

Citations

Ensure every citation is formatted correctly, the names and sources are correctly spelled, and every source that appears in the paper appears in the reference or works cited page, and vice versa.

Accuracy

Look over your figures, direct quotations, and paraphrases from other sources to ensure that you’ve written them accurately from sources (for example, make sure the number is 3,000 not 30,000).

Grammar

Examine your sentences for errors such as missing words, incomplete sentences, subject-verb agreement, etc.

Other Formatting

Check the assignment sheet for instructions regarding MLA or APA and formatting specifically requested by instructor like margins, font, font size, spacing, etc.

The “Nuts and Bolts”

Look over the external bits and pieces of your assignment, like making sure you have the right file format, use the right naming conventions required by your instructor, etc.

These are just a few ways to edit and proofread your paper, and you may spend more time in one area over another. On the next page, we have also included a list of editing strategies for you to incorporate into your writing process.

Editing and Proofreading Strategies

Set Aside

After you have completed your essay, be sure to spend some time away from your writing. While it may be tempting to begin editing immediately, it is often easier to see your own mistakes after you have taken a quick vacation from your work.

Read Out Loud

When editing, writers will often overlook mistakes and typos. Reading the paper out loud will help you slow down and could help you “hear” the pacing and rhythm of your paper. This might help you discover missing words or misspellings that you might not have otherwise noticed.

Read in Reverse Order

Sometimes, writers get into a pattern of reviewing their work. When this happens, it can be even harder to pick out potential errors. To avoid this, read your essay starting from the last paragraph to the first. This will help you focus only on the editing process.

Pause Between Sentences

Editing is a process not to be rushed; in order to find those sentence level mistakes, read your sentences slowly and pause at the end of each sentence. This will give your brain time to process what you’ve read and to decide if any changes need to be made.

Create a Checklist

Based on your own writing strengths and weaknesses, we recommend that you create your own editing checklist to help you recall what areas to focus on. Use the categories listed on the front of this handout to design your own based on your writing habits.

Make a Learning Hub Appointment

While they will not edit your paper for you, they can help you to identify patterns of error in your writing and how to go about fixing them as you proofread. Also, take advantage of the resources offered on The Learning Hub’s [website](#).

A Final Note

In terms of the writing processes, editing your work is one of the last processes you should go through. After writing a paper, it is easy to want to address the grammar mistakes first, but if you find yourself needing to rewrite whole sections of the essay, making grammar corrections to your paper before rewriting would likely be a waste of time. Only after you are confident that your paper meets the assignment criteria and will not undergo any significant revisions should you begin your editing/proofreading process.