

Editing Your Paper

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EDITING YOUR PAPER

Finishing a draft of your paper doesn't mark the end of the writing process; in fact, it's just the beginning of the next important step: editing. Editing allows you to tighten your ideas and ensure they're presented clearly and logically, often making your paper easier to read and better overall.

Check for spelling.

When using a computer, spell check your paper to clean up obvious errors and simple mistakes like typos. However, don't rely on your word processor to do the work for you, as a computer will never pick up on the difference between words like "their" and "there."

Read your work aloud.

For the most part, we initially learn language by hearing it. Because of this, our ears are generally much better at picking up subtle mistakes in grammar, awkward phrasing of sentences, and overuse of words or phrases. You'll be able to hear mistakes with your ears that you'd otherwise miss with just your eyes.

When editing, focus on one sentence at a time.

Make sure all tenses agree, and there are no run-on sentences. At their root, sentences are all about subjects and verbs; if these two don't agree with one another, the sentence won't make any sense. Also, be aware of the length and complexity of your sentences. If a sentence is so long that, by the end of it, you don't remember how it started, it probably needs to be split into smaller sentences.

Edit your work more than once.

Even the most trained eye can't catch every mistake with just one reading. Plan several editing sessions to make sure the paper is thoroughly corrected, and to make sure you don't overwhelm yourself trying to rush through a quick revision at the last minute.

Ask a friend to read over your work.

As the writer, it can be hard to edit for clarity because you already know what you're trying to say. Let someone else read what you've written, and check to see where they felt lost or confused. Also, a new reader can often find mistakes you may have missed, even after several revisions.