



### What is PROOFREADING?

Proofreading is looking for and eliminating 'mechanical' errors that sneak into everyone's writing - problems like doubled-up words ("the the"), mismatched subjects and verbs ("she have"), words that have been left out ("your ticket Nadi costs \$12") or that have sneaked in ("your ticket to the Nadi costs \$12"), or words that are misspelled ("mispelled").

Proofreading comes after you have looked at your finished paper one last time to make sure that it has consistency, focus, and a logical flow.

## How to proofread

### Leave enough time

- 01** Once you have finished your paper, leave it for at least two or three days before you proofread it. But doing this requires good time management. You need to start writing your paper well before its due date so that you can leave it after completing it and return to it with 'fresh eyes'.

### Read Slowly

- 02** Look at each letter, word, and punctuation mark so that you notice:
- things that are present but shouldn't be.
  - things that are missing but should be there.

**Hint:** As you read, use a pointer (pen or pencil) or a ruler that you move down the page one line at a time.

- 03** Read your paper out loud, one sentence at a time. Often your ear will catch mistakes or problems that your eye misses—especially in punctuation.

### Find a Proofreading Buddy

- 04** Give your buddy a copy of your paper and give him/her time to go over it. Later, get back with your buddy and have him give you his feedback.

### Repeat

- 05** Proofread several times, working your way through your own checklist of possible problems. Go through your paper once for each problem area. For example, review your paper once, checking for subject-verb agreement. (Do all your plural subjects have plural verbs?). Then you might check for appropriate use of verb tenses (past, present, future, conditional).

Some other problems on your checklist might include pronoun usage, missing or inappropriate articles ("a" and "the"), missing or inappropriate punctuation, sentence fragments (missing verbs), and any other problems that you know occur often in your own writing.

- 06** If in doubt, always double-check spelling, choice of words, dates, names, and other references. A good dictionary and a good Thesaurus are useful during proofreading and when you're writing or revising your paper.

## Proofreading & Word Processing

- 01** Use a spell-checker, keeping in mind that most systems default to the American spelling but NOT the British one. But don't rely on the spell checker to catch words that are correctly spelled but incorrectly used (e.g., "there" for "their") or incorrectly typed (e.g., "comfort" for "conform"). Some spell-checkers can identify repeated words (e.g., "the the") or possible punctuation problems (e.g., a missing period before a capital letter), but these computer aids are not substitutes for your own careful reading and judgment.

- 02** Don't proofread your document by reading it on the computer monitor. Print it out and check the

hard copy. Reading a long document on a scrolling screen is both tiring and confusing.

**03** Set line-spacing to double space (if you are using pen and paper, write on every other line) so that you have room to enter your corrections. For the same reason, leave adequate margins on both the left and right sides of the pages

**04** If someone else does your typing or word-processing, you must go through the finished paper yourself, word by word. Typists make guesses about hand-writing, and often they guess incorrectly, especially when the subject matter is technical or complex.



## Common mistakes to look for when proofreading

→ **Putting the wrong word in the wrong place, especially when using homophones.**  
Homophones are words which sound the same but have different spellings and meanings.

E.g.  
The men left there coats in the hallway. (wrong)  
The men left their coats in the hallway. (correct).

Other common homophone pairs to watch out for are of and off; to and too; and then and than.

→ **Leaving letters out, especially in the middle of words.**  
Many words contain silent letters, or letters that are not sounded clearly when you speak quickly.

E.g. Debtor and Library

→ **Mistakes when adding an ending, or suffix, to a root word.**  
It's easy to make mistakes, especially when adding the -ing suffix.

It's important to remember the rules for adding the -ing suffix to root words that end in 'e' or a short vowel followed by a consonant.

E.g. Make + -ing = **making** (drop the final 'e')  
shut + ing = **shutting** (double the final consonant)

→ **Using a small 'i' as a pronoun.**  
A pronoun is a word that stands in place of a name such as Sheila or John. Remember that whenever 'I' is a word on its own, you should use a capital letter.

E.g. Max and I went to the cinema last night.

→ **Missing words out altogether.**  
Most people think much faster than they can write, so it's easy to leave out small words such as a, the, and, it, and in. Careful proofreading can help you spot this type of mistake.

→ **Getting letters the wrong way round, especially i and e.**

freind ✗ friend ✓  
cheif ✗ chief ✓

**Hint:** Remember the spelling rule 'i before e except after c'.

→ **Leaving out apostrophes.**  
Apostrophes are punctuation marks which are either used to show possession, or to show where letters have been left out. Apostrophes are important because they often make meaning clearer.

E.g. *Can't* = cannot  
*don't* = do not (shows missing letters)

The boy's books are missing = books belonging to one boy  
The boys' books are missing = books belonging to several boys

→ **Using one word when you should use two.**

E.g. *Alot* should be written as *a lot*  
*infront* should be written as *in front*

→ **Mistakes with subject-verb agreement.**  
Mistakes in agreement include subject-verb agreement, noun-pronoun agreement, and tense agreement.

E.g. 'We **was** going to the airport when we discovered we'd forgotten our tickets.' ✘  
 'We **were** going to the airport when we discovered we'd forgotten our tickets.' ✓  
 'Every girl is supposed to sign **their** name.' ✘  
 'Every girl is supposed to sign **her** name.' ✓  
 'They presented their gifts as soon as they **arrive**.' ✘  
 'They presented their gifts as soon as they **arrived**.' ✓

→ Using "**should of**". This is another common mistake in sentences such as:

E.g. I **should of** packed my raincoat. ✘  
 I **should have** packed my raincoat. ✓

→ Mistakes with 'one of...' expressions.

E.g. 'One of my **mentor** is Ricky.' ✘  
 One of my **mentors** is Ricky.' ✓

→ Writing incomplete sentences

E.g. 'Whereas preserving our traditions has its advantages.' ✘  
 'Many people believe we should get rid of old customs, whereas preserving our traditions has its advantages.' ✓



## Activity: Proofreading Practice

These exercises will give you practice in spotting and correcting common mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Each sentence should be grammatically complete. Practise, spotting and correcting common mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Each sentence should be grammatically complete. Check carefully; there is more than one mistake in many of the sentences. An answer key is on the back page.

### TASK 1

#### **Education, Manpower and Employment** *(adapted from Baba, 1986 p.186)*

One of thing that school has done very effective in the South Pacific has being the production of manpower to met the needs for independence or self-government in the islands particularly those need pertaining to posts in

### TASK 1 (cont'd)

the public services, most of the critical position in the public service has been taken over by local people and the process of localisation have been large successful in some cases, the pace of localisation has thought to be too rapidly and that local people without the necessary qualifications and experience has been placed in responsible positions alleged to lead to drop in the quality of public service the relationship of employments and education have now become very tenuous in the islands.

### TASK 2

#### **Plate Tectonics Theory and Earthquakes** *(adapted from Chemistry Dept. USP, 2000 p.31)*

Theory of plate tectonic is attraction to geologist and other scientists in that it easily explains the distibutions of earthquake and the rock motion associated with they. The very close correspondence between earthquake belt and tectonic plate edges are very clear when you study the maps that have beeing constructed; there are three type of plate boundaries: diverging, transform, and converging; each types has a characteristic patterns of earthquake distribution and rock motions.

### TASK 3

#### **Efficiency and Scarcity**

*(adapted from Sharma, 1986 p.101)*

The continuing choosing or deciding among alternatives is necessary because a fundamental human condition scarcity. No people no country can have too much of of everything as he or she want. Given scarcity it is important not only to produce the cost desirable goods to make the right output decisions but also to produce those good effeiciently. Efficiency is important because human want are outrunning what can produced from the available resources which if they were used efficiently then the maximum value of production can be maintained. efficiency has meaning and important because of scarcity.

## TASK 4

### The Spelling Checker

(Source unknown, quoted in Swales & Feak, 1994 p.31)

I have a spelling checker  
It came with my PC.  
It plainly marks four my revue  
Mistakes I cannot sea.  
I've run this poem threw it,  
I'm sure your please to no,  
It's letter perfect in it's weigh,  
My checker tolled me sew.



## Answers

**Task 4: The Spelling Checker**  
(Source unknown, quoted in Swales & Feak, 1994 p.31)  
I have a spelling checker,  
It came with my PC.  
It plainly marks for my review  
Mistakes I cannot see.  
I've run this poem through it,  
I'm sure you're pleased to know,  
It's letter perfect in its way,  
My checker told me so.

**Task 3: Efficiency and Scarcity** (Sharma, 1986 p.101)  
The continual choosing or deciding among alternatives is necessary because of a fundamental human condition: scarcity. No person nor any country can have as much of everything as he or she wants. Given scarcity, it is important not only to produce the cost desirable goods, to make the right output decisions, but also to produce those goods efficiently. Efficiency is important because human wants outrun what can be produced from the available resources. If the resources can be used efficiently, then the maximum value of production can be obtained. Efficiency has meaning and importance because of scarcity.



## References

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- Chemistry Department, School of Pure and Applied Sciences. (2000). *SC106: Earth Science Coursebook*. Suva: University Extension, University of the South Pacific
- Sharma, P. (1986). *Development of Economic Theory - A Brief Exposition*. Suva: Print Centre
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**Task 1: Education, Manpower and Employment** (Baba, 1986 p.186)  
One of the things that the school has done very effectively in the South Pacific has been the production of manpower to meet the needs for independence or self-government in the islands, particularly those needs pertaining to posts in the public services. Most of the critical positions in the public services have been taken over by the local people and the process of localisation has been largely successful. In some cases, the pace of localisation has been thought to be too rapid and local people without the necessary qualifications and experience have been placed in responsible positions, allegedly leading to a drop in the quality of public service. The relationship between employment and education has now become very tenuous in the islands.

**Task 2: Plate Tectonics Theory and Earthquakes**  
(Chemistry Dept. USP, 2000 p.31)

The theory of plate tectonics is attractive to geologists and other scientists in that it easily explains the distribution of earthquakes and the rock motion associated with them. The very close correspondence between earthquake belts and tectonic plate edges is very clear when you study the maps that have been constructed. There are three types of plate boundaries: diverging, transforming, and converging. Each type has a characteristic pattern of earthquake distribution and rock motion.