Proofreading Strategies

What is Proofreading?

Proofreading is defined as checking for small errors and mistakes in your writing, such as grammatical errors, misspellings, and typos. Usually, writers proofread after they are confident in the content and organization of their papers.

Suggested Strategies

- **Proofread multiple times**
  - It is easy to catch several similar errors in one reading but miss different types of errors. Thus, you need to re-read your paper several times to catch all the different kinds of errors.

- **Take Breaks**
  - Even a short break between writing and reading can help greatly! You will not be as tired.
  - Take breaks between each proofreading. You will do better at catching different errors.

- **Take your time**
  - Many errors will be missed if you read too quickly. Slow down!
  - Use a ruler to show only one line of text at a time.
  - Point to each word with your pen or pencil as you read.

- **Give yourself plenty of time before the due date**
  - Because you need to proofread multiple times, take breaks, and slow down, you need to allow yourself plenty of time to thoroughly proofread the paper.

- **Read your paper from someone else’s perspective**
  - Would this sentence be clear to another person? Would someone else understand it?

- **Read your sentences in reverse order (last sentence first, next to last sentence second, etc.)**
  - This is an excellent way to find sentence fragments and repetitive ideas.

- **Read in reverse order, word-by-word**
  - Since the words are out of context, misspellings and typos stick out much more than normal.

- **Read out loud**
  - Use your pen or pencil to point to each word as you read it out loud.
  - This will make you slow down and read every word. Often, you will hear errors that you might have read over, especially missing words and errors in verb tense and subject-verb agreement.
  - Use *Natural Reader* on the Writing Center computers to hear your writing spoken to you.

- **Use Microsoft Word’s “CTRL+F” Search**
  - If you know you make a certain error, you can use a “CTRL+F” search to find it.
  - Hold down the CTRL (Control) and F keys at the same time.
  - Type your error into the search bar of the pop-up box.
  - Click Find. It will take you to the first error. Continue clicking Find, and you will go through every occurrence of that error.

- **Do NOT rely on grammar-checker or spell-checker**
  - If I mean to write “their” but accidentally write “there,” neither grammar-checker nor spell-checker will catch my mistake. I have to find it myself.

- **Create a personal strategy**
  - Figure out which mistakes you make the most and a good way for you to find and correct them.