

# Proofreading

Proofreading is an acquired skill, therefore it is possible for anyone to develop this helpful ability. The following suggestions will assist you in becoming a proficient proofreader.

Tips for successful proofreading.

- ❖ Cultivate a healthy sense of doubt. If you tend to make the same mistakes repeatedly, double check for these errors.
- ❖ Read very slowly. If possible, read out loud. Read one word at a time.
- ❖ Read what is actually on the page, not what you think is there. (This is quite difficult, particularly if you wrote what you are reading).
- ❖ Proofread more than once. If possible, work with someone else.

No one consciously intends to make an error in their work. There are two sources of unconscious error:

- ❖ Faulty information from the kinesthetic memory. If you have misspelled a word like "separate," you will unthinkingly misspell it again.
- ❖ A split second of inattention. The mind works far faster than the pen or computer keyboard.

It is the unconscious nature of the worst that makes proofreading so difficult. If someone writes, "I like girdle cakes for breakfast," they do not have a weird sense of food. The student believed they had written "griddle cakes" and because that's what he was sure he had written, that's what he "saw" during proofreading. By slowing down and reading each word, mistakes like this can be caught. You have to doubt every word in order to catch every mistake.

Because unconscious mistakes are so easy to make, take nothing for granted when proofreading. Reading aloud appeals to two of the senses. As you are forced to slow down, you hear what you are reading as well as see it. These serve as checks and balances. It is often possible to hear a mistake such as an omitted or repeated word that you have overlooked.

**Remember: Professional editors proofread as many as ten times, and errors still occur. Be deliberate and careful and you will cut down on the needless mistakes that plague your papers.**