

# the Writing Centers at Saint Mary's

Winona and Minneapolis

## Writing Process: Proofreading Tips

What does proofread mean? Proofread means to scan your paper line by line to find mistakes in grammar, punctuation, style, typing, and spelling.

Proofreading is usually the last stage of writing a paper—after organizing, composing, and revising, revising, and revising—but some people proofread as they write.

1. Proofread the second half of the document first. That's where the errors tend to crop up. Then proofread the first half.
2. Proofread long papers in segments. Proofread a short section, put it aside for a while, then return later to read the next short section. Fatigue is the enemy of effective proofreading.
3. Proofread backwards. Begin at the end and read back through the document sentence by sentence to help you focus on "surface" mistakes rather than meaning.
4. Place a ruler under each line as you read to keep your eyes from skipping lines of text.
5. Get to know your typical mistakes. Make a list of the errors you made and look for those in the next paper. Before you proofread, look over papers you have written in the past.
6. Proofread for one type of error at a time. If commas are your most frequent problem, go through the paper checking for just that one problem. Then proofread again for the next most frequent problem.
7. Proofread at the time of day when you are most alert.
8. Proofread aloud. This will slow you down and help you notice the difference between what you meant to write and what you actually wrote.
9. When you find an error, correct it and then reread the line.
10. Run the spell checker before you proofread. You'll have fewer errors to find.
11. Run the grammar checker. Set it up to run with the spell check. Before using the grammar check you will need to customize it to check academic papers.
12. Use the Find or Replace functions of the word processor to correct multiple occurrences of the same error.

