

Proofreading your work

- ✓ Use a professional proofreader if you can. Professionals are experienced and are trained to spot common errors and inconsistencies, leaving you confident in your finished document. If your text is going to be published, you should certainly seek a professional proofreader.
- ✓ If you can't afford a professional, ask a friend, colleague or family member to read through your document. We all become 'blind' to what we have written and that fresh pair of eyes can make all the difference.
- ✓ Leave plenty of time for a final read-through of your document. A rushed job is likely to contain errors you would normally avoid. Make sure you have a clear head, and ideally leave a day or two between finishing your writing and doing the final read-through.
- ✓ When checking your own work, read slowly to make sure you check every word. If you skim read, you're likely to read what you meant to write, rather than what you actually wrote. Use your finger or a ruler to guide you through a paper document. Short words and thin letters can easily be missed or misread, e.g. *is, it, in*.
- ✓ If you're proofreading on screen, beware of typos that are not picked up by spell checkers, e.g. *form* instead of *from*, and for words that sound the same but are spelled differently (homonyms), e.g. *their, there, they're*.
- ✓ Read out loud to ensure you read every word. This also helps you to keep focused and helps you to check sense and flow. Reading inside your head allows you to skim read and this can let the mind wander.
- ✓ If you have time, check your document more than once. Your first read might be for sense and flow; put yourself in your audience's shoes and think about how they will receive it. Your second read might be for a word-level check of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Consistency and layout can be as important as getting your words right so this could be your third level of checks.