# Proofreading Techniques

## Give yourself time to proofread.

- Take your time. Work slowly so that you catch everything.
- Knowing you have time to proofread later will allow you to write more freely and to develop and connect your ideas more fully in your initial drafts. You'll feel comfortable letting go of grammar and punctuation at that stage if you have time built in for proofreading later in the process.

## Distance yourself as much as possible from your own writing.

- Don't try to proofread right away. Take a break, anywhere between 15 minutes or a few days.
- Try to view your paper as someone else's work.
  - ➢ Role-play: you are the reader, not the writer.
  - ➢ Change the font, size, and margins to trick yourself into seeing your paper as a different document.
- Print your paper since you're used to reading it on the computer screen.

## Read aloud.

- Read every word slowly (to catch missing words and repeated words).
- Listen for places that sound awkward or that you stumble over or have to reread. Check your syntax, grammar, and punctuation. If you can't identify what's funny about a word or sentence, mark it, then look it up or ask a tutor.
- Get help from a friend or tutor.
  - ➢ Have them read it (while you read along), and listen for places that don't sound the same in someone else's voice as they do in your own. What needs to change for your reader to read a sentence the way you intended it to be read?
  - ➢ Or have them listen (and read along) while you read. Have them stop you if you read something differently from what is written on the page. (We have a tendency to "read" what we meant to say instead of what is actually written.)

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## Know what your own most common mistakes are.

- Look up or ask a tutor for lessons on those particular grammar rules or writing conventions.
- Look for each one individually; find and correct only one type of error at a time.
- Use the "search" function to find words or pieces of punctuation you know you need to check. For example, search for "it" if you often confuse "its" and "it's", or search for closing quotation marks (") to make sure every quote is followed by a citation.

## Focus on the words and sentences, not the content.

- Finish writing your paper and revising your work before you proofread. Proofreading should be the very last step of your process.
- Read your paper backwards…
  - ➢ By sentence to check the grammar and syntax of each sentence.
  - ➢ By word to check for spelling.
- Read your paper with a piece of paper or a ruler underlining just one line at a time. This way you can focus on one sentence at a time instead of getting wrapped up in the flow of the ideas and skipping ahead.

## Do not rely on your computer's spell-check or grammar-check. When in doubt, mark it, then look it up or ask a tutor.