

PROOFREADING CHECKLIST

After reading through your final revision. Wait ten minutes or more. Then, read your paper BACKWARDS--starting at the end and reading one sentence at a time. Check for:

__HOMONYMS (their, they're, there). Also check for words that sound alike (are & our; have & of)

__USAGE (check for potential problem words on list). Consult a usage dictionary, regular dictionary, or another style book for any words you might be unsure of.

__PUNCTUATION (Review and check and questionable uses of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, periods, question marks, exclamation points, colons, semi-colons, dashes, etc.) Remember to check for run-on sentences joined by commas and sentence fragments.

__CAPITALIZATION: First words of sentences, first word following a colon, and first word if a quotation should all be capitalized. Note: the first word of a quotation is not capitalized if it is blended into the sentence. All proper nouns are capitalized; common nouns are not capitalized.

__SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT: This can be tricky when dealing with compound sentences. Following are examples taken from Diana Hacker's *A Manual of Style*:

The **slaughter** of pandas for their pelts **has** caused the panda population to decline drastically.

None of us is perfect

Neither the professor nor her students were able to **solve** the problem.

__CONSISTENCY OF TENSE: Use present tense when writing about literature. In all cases, be consistent.

__PRONOUN REFERENTS: Be especially careful when dealing with compound pronouns. Analyze whether the pronoun is a subject or an object by omitting the other part of the sentence.

Examples: Give the present to her father & (I/me) *Test*: Give the present to me.
Her father and (I/me) went fishing. *Test*: I went fishing

__PARALLELISM: Keep a compound sentence in parallel form.

Example: He **plays** piano, **competes** in gymnastics, and **maintains** an active social life.

__CLARITY: Are all your ideas explained substantially. Look for and fix vague referents, usually characterized by a stray "this," "that" or "them"

Example: (from Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*)

Visiting dignitaries watched yesterday as the ground was broken for the new high-energy physics laboratory with a blowout safety wall. **This** is the first visible evidence of the university's plans for modernization and expansion.

Better Rewrite: Visiting dignitaries watched yesterday as the ground was broken for the new high-energy physics laboratory with a blowout safety wall. **The ceremony afforded** the first visible evidence of the university's plans for modernization and expansion.

RESOURCES:

Hacker, Diana L. *A Manual of Style*, 2nd. Ed., New York: St. Martin's, 1997.

Strunk, William & E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, New York: Macmillan (I have an old edition. I'm sure there are newer ones).

There are also several dictionaries of usage. John Fowler, *Modern English Usage*, published by Oxford University Press, is one of the most popular. And don't forget your good old dictionary. It can be invaluable!

SEE HOW MANY MISTAKES YOU CAN FIND. FEEL FREE TO REWRITE AS NECESSARY TO MAKE THIS PARAGRAPH BETTER.

If I hadn't seen its tail; I wouldn't know her as the raccoon I saw between the trees in the forest. She lead me through the woods and I wanted to follow her further. Except that I began to worry about getting lost. So I returned home and worried anyway about the affect of the snow which started and how she might not survival without a principal source of food. The next day I woke up and their were footprints outside my window. I took it as a compliment that she 'd like to find me when she became hungry and realized I should of accepted the fact that--allusion or not--I was the only mother she knew.