

Ten Top Tips for...

Proofreading



**A Word Wizard
guide to
making
your documents
word perfect**

Perfect proofreading in ten easy steps

from word-wizard.com

1 – Print out your document on A4 paper. Include a 2cm margin all round, and in double line spacing. Use a font that is easy to read, and isn't elaborate (such as this one, which is Helvetica). The idea is to make the page as plain and simple as possible for reading. Print in black.

2 – Read through once without making any marks. You're looking to make a mental note of any 'red flags' that come up as you read.

3 – Choose a contrasting coloured pen to make your corrections. Mark it so that you can see clearly what you're doing and will understand your marks when you come back to them later.

4 – Go through your document line by line at a slowish pace. Pause at the end of each line. Does it make sense? If you need to read a line multiple times to understand it, it's an indication that there is something amiss. Make a mark to come back to it later. This is not the time to rewrite that line.

5 – It's time to target spelling. Don't rely on a built-in spell checker. For a start it may default to USA English, which has some marked differences to UK English. If a word strikes you as oddly spelt, look it up, using a hard copy or online dictionary. Is it the correct form of the word – ie. Too, to or two? See our other tips section online for help in this area.

6 – Look for inconsistency. Have you used capital letters throughout, not just as the start of sentences? If so, have you

used them consistently? Same goes for numbers. Do you use a mixture of numerals and words, ie. Ten or 10. What about bullet points? Have you used a mixture of numbers and blobs? It doesn't matter what you choose, as long as you only use the one style throughout your document.

7 – Punctuation. Are there full stops where they are needed? What about quotation marks, question marks, commas? The placing of a comma can change the meaning of a sentence, so be careful where you put them. Reading your document aloud can help you to work out where the emphasis of punctuation ought to be.

8 – Have a break. If your document is long, you will tire of looking for mistakes and stop being able to spot them. Do it the next day if you have time.

9 – Read your work backwards. This might seem odd, but reading from the end of the document to the beginning can help some people spot spelling errors more easily, because you're not anticipating the word order or the flow of a sentence.

10 – Ask someone else to read it. A great help when you're tired and on a deadline. We all have different strengths and abilities to spot errors. Someone good at maths might spot an error where you have used numbers. Some people have great awareness of space, and might spot an extra return or indent where there shouldn't be one. Someone might be good with names, and able to spot an inconsistency, ie. Ann or Anne.