Editing and proofreading your writing

Editing:

- means revising your writing thoughtfully
- gives you the opportunity to clarify and fine-tune your work.

When you start to produce a piece of written work, you are likely to be aware of various targets and standards that you need to work to, such as:

the word limit; the required level of academic writing; the need to present material in a clear and logical order; high standards in spelling, referencing, and grammar.

If you become too concerned at this stage about the required standard of the end product, you may feel reluctant to begin writing at all.

Therefore, making a clear separation between the processes of 'writing' and 'editing' can be helpful. It is can be more useful to produce something imperfect, then revise it, than to waste time trying to produce something that is perfect first time round.

Writing may involve	Editing may involve
including	adding/removing
presenting	improving
recording	reviewing
feeling closely involved	feeling fairly objective

Editing includes:

- **rewriting** sections to make points clearer
- **deleting** irrelevant points and adding new stronger ones
- **changing** the order of sentences and paragraphs to improve the flow/organization
- **adding** link words and phrases to show the relationships between your ideas.

Be ruthless: if the information isn't directly answering the question, cut it out! You will get more marks for showing you answered the question than you will for a random list of everything you have read about the subject.

Think about your reader. Could they follow the points you are making? You know what you are trying to say but will your reader? Are there gaps in your reasoning which need to be filled?

Editing tips:

- Remove clumsy expressions and inappropriate language.
- Substitute simple words for too sophisticated synonyms.
- Remove informal words and expressions.
- Check your points are supported either by citing the ideas of others (quotation/paraphrase/summary) or with examples.

Proofreading:

- is the narrower job of checking such elements as spelling, grammar, and page numbering. Detailed proof reading is usually best done as the last stage in the editing process.

- needs to be done thoroughly and systematically, otherwise it is very easy to miss details that need to be changed

- is an important skill to develop as a friend won't necessarily always be available to check your work!

You may have a well-argued response to the question, but spelling and grammar mistakes will leave a poor impression on your marker.

Proofreading tips:

- Allow plenty of time for proofreading. Put your essay to one side for at least a day or two so that you can look at it with fresh eyes.

- Read your essay aloud, slowly. You can HEAR your mistakes more easily than see them. Pointing to words as you read can help.

- Read your essay to someone else, slowly, and you could listen to their essay. You will be able to HEAR each other's mistakes.

- Make your proof reading relevant to your own writing. Look through some previous writing that has been marked, and make a list of your own typical errors, then use this to form the basis of your proof reading strategy.

- Take a structured approach: focus in turn on specific potential problems, rather than trying to identify everything at one go. For example, you could read through once for referencing; then read again to check punctuation; then again for spelling.

- Check that your references are complete and accurate.

- Check your department's guidelines for the presentation of written work. This includes spacing, font size, page numbering, margins.

- Find a quiet place to work**.** Don't try to do your proofreading in front of the TV; find a place where you can concentrate and avoid distractions.

- If possible, do your editing and proofreading in several short blocks of time. This helps with concentration.

Common problems are:

- ➢ faulty abbreviations
- ➢ spelling errors
- ➢ too much space between two words
- ➢ missing or misplaced apostrophes
- ➢ inappropriate changes of tense
- ➢ singular and plural mixed up
- ➢ leaving a reference in the list, when it has been removed from the text.

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