Bracken Business Communications Clinic

Proofreading: The Final Step

You have typed the last line of your paper. What's next? Before turning in a written assignment, be sure to proofread it for any spelling or grammatical errors.

1. Start the proofreading process by using your computer's spell check and grammar check. One word of caution: **Do not stop here. Spell check does not catch everything.** Using these computer functions is a great way to begin proofreading, but there are other steps to follow.

2. Print out a copy of your document. Read it aloud. Do you notice any errors? Do any of the sentences sound awkward? If so, make the necessary corrections. (**See BBCC handout, "10 Most Common Writing Errors."**)

3. Read through the printed copy of your paper one more time. Use your pen like a cursor to mark your spot on the page and move slowly, reading word by word. Change any errors.

4. You may want to read each sentence backward too. This slows down your mind's ability to "read" a word correctly even when there is an error. It forces you to look at each word individually.

What to Check As You Proofread:
- Does each sentence contain a subject and a verb?
- Is there punctuation at the end of each sentence?
- Can each sentence in a paragraph stand by itself? Does it have clear meaning?
- Check the text for misspellings and wrong word usage (too/to, its/it's, effect/affect).
- Check for typos.
- Look for missing or misplaced apostrophes (**See BBCC handout, "Plurals and Possessives"**).
- Watch for an overuse of pronouns (he or she, instead of a person's name).
- Look for missing or misplaced commas (**See BBCC handout, "Comma Rules"**).