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# Editing and Proofreading

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## Outline

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- What is Editing? What is Proofreading?
- Macro and Micro editing
- Readability: A Reminder
- The "Rules of Writing"



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## Editing

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- Editing involves a close reading and re-writing of the **penultimate** version of the text
- Editing involves, amongst other things, reading and improving the sense of the material.
  - Do the ideas flow?
  - Are the arguments sound?
  - Have I supported the ideas with evidence?
  - Do the sentences make sense?

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- Proofreading involves checking the **final** manuscript for residual mistakes that may have escaped the editing process
  - Spelling
  - noun-verb agreement errors
  - punctuation and capitalisation
- Proofing does not necessarily involve reading for the sense of material.

# Why Edit and Proofread?

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- Making sure that style and literacy is as good as it can be is an important part of the job of the researcher.
- Editing and proofreading the work are crucial stages in the research process and can make the difference between a very good essay/thesis and an average one.
- Neglecting these stages is like leaving a wall unfinished after all the preparation involved in painting your house!
- Relying on yourself, not the TLU, is good practice

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### Allow Enough Time

- Put aside your work for a week or so before beginning the checking process. It's a good idea to allow at least 4 weeks to complete an essay:
  - Week 1 for research and writing the first draft;
  - Week 2 for “laying down” time (you can still do additional research during this period);
  - Week 3 for correcting and revising the first draft;
  - Week 4 for correcting and polishing the penultimate draft.

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#### Vary Your Editing Activities

- If you are pressured for time you might try drafting one chapter/section of a thesis/essay while editing or proofreading another.
- This keeps you interested in what you are doing while keeping several projects moving along.

### Research Editing Skills

- The *MLA Style Manual* is a very good manual
- Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*
- K. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*
- The Australian Government Publishing Service *Style Manual* is essential reading.
- *Joseph William's Style*
- Michael Swan's *Practical English Usage*

### Familiarise Yourself with the University Requirements

- How do they want tables and charts to be presented?
- What margins are required?
- What spacing is needed?
- How should you set out the bibliography?
- How should you order and arrange the chapters and sections of your work?

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- Double space all pages except Reference List
- 2-3 cm margins for comments
- Separate page for Reference list
- Cover page
- Number all pages except CP

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#### Familiarise Yourself with the Departmental and Faculty Requirements

- Can I use “bullet points” when explaining something or do they prefer a prose format?
- Do they require the third person or can I use first person pronouns?
- What tense use is required?
- Do they require headers and/or footers?

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#### Recruit Help

- Everyone needs help in editing/proofreading his or her written work—even professional writers.
- Thus, recruiting assistance to help you with the task is not “cheating”—it is good sense. This might involve:
  - asking a family member to read your material
  - swapping your work with colleagues
  - paying a professional editor (@\$18-35 p.h)
  - Going to the TLU (may be very busy, so be organised!)

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#### Get Help from as Many Sources as Possible

- The more people you involve in this process the less chance you have of errors in the final version.
- You will be surprised how several people reading the same work independently can find quite different errors!
- Use your colleagues. Form a study group and swap essays!

## Planning

- Don't waste time proofreading a chapter of a thesis or an essay before you have finished writing it.
- Resist the temptation to fiddle about with formatting. Only do this kind of polishing when the essay or thesis chapter is finished
- Only proofread the **final** print out

### Edit Forwards but Proof Backwards

- When editing you are checking for sense amongst other things, so read in the normal way.
- But when proofing you are looking for residual errors and not sense.
- When proofing, try reading each sentence independently starting from the final sentence in the last chapter and working backwards. (Cover over lines you are not reading with a ruler.)
- Try reading each sentence aloud. This also helps.

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#### Use a Micro and Macro Editing Technique

- As well as utilising the help of others, you can also help yourself by going through the stages of macro and micro editing.
- It is best to do this from *macro* editing to *micro* editing and not the reverse order.
- In this way you won't miss anything.

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### Layout of Main Text

- View each page singly. Check for typesetting: are all the paragraphs indented by the same amount?
- Are the margins OK?
- Is the text justified? Double spaced
- Is spacing between words consistent?
- Is spacing between sections consistent?
- Is page numbering sequential and in the correct font?
- Is the header and footer consistent throughout?
- Does the layout have “orphans” or “widows” (single words appearing on the start or end of a page).

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#### Layout of Title Page

- Is all relevant information there in the right order?
- No page number?
- Centred?
- Does your name and discipline appear in the correct form?
- For essays: do you list your student number and tutor's or lecturer's name? Date due? Date submitted.

# Common Problems with References

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- No references at all!
- Given name instead of surname in in-text references
- Incorrect or non-matching details
- Putting URLs in in-text citations
- Not in alphabetical order by surname
- Missing details: volume/issue no (for journals) publisher/place of pub (for books)

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#### Layout of Bibliography

- Are all the references there? (Cross check them with the text.)
- Do the URLs work!
- Is the layout the same as given in style manual or discipline journal?
- Is the punctuation the same?
- Is the layout in strict alphabetical order?

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#### Layout of Tables and Graphs

- Are these in the right place: close to the text where they are mentioned?
- Are they labelled correctly with the source?
- Are they listed in the List of Tables in the preliminary pages?



# Using Diagram and Graphs

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Text, text, Text, text, Text, text, Text, text, Text, text,  
Text, text, Text, text, Text, text, (see Figure 1) Text,  
text, Text, text.

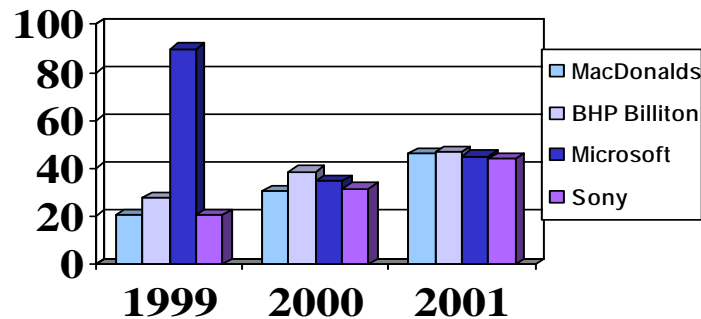


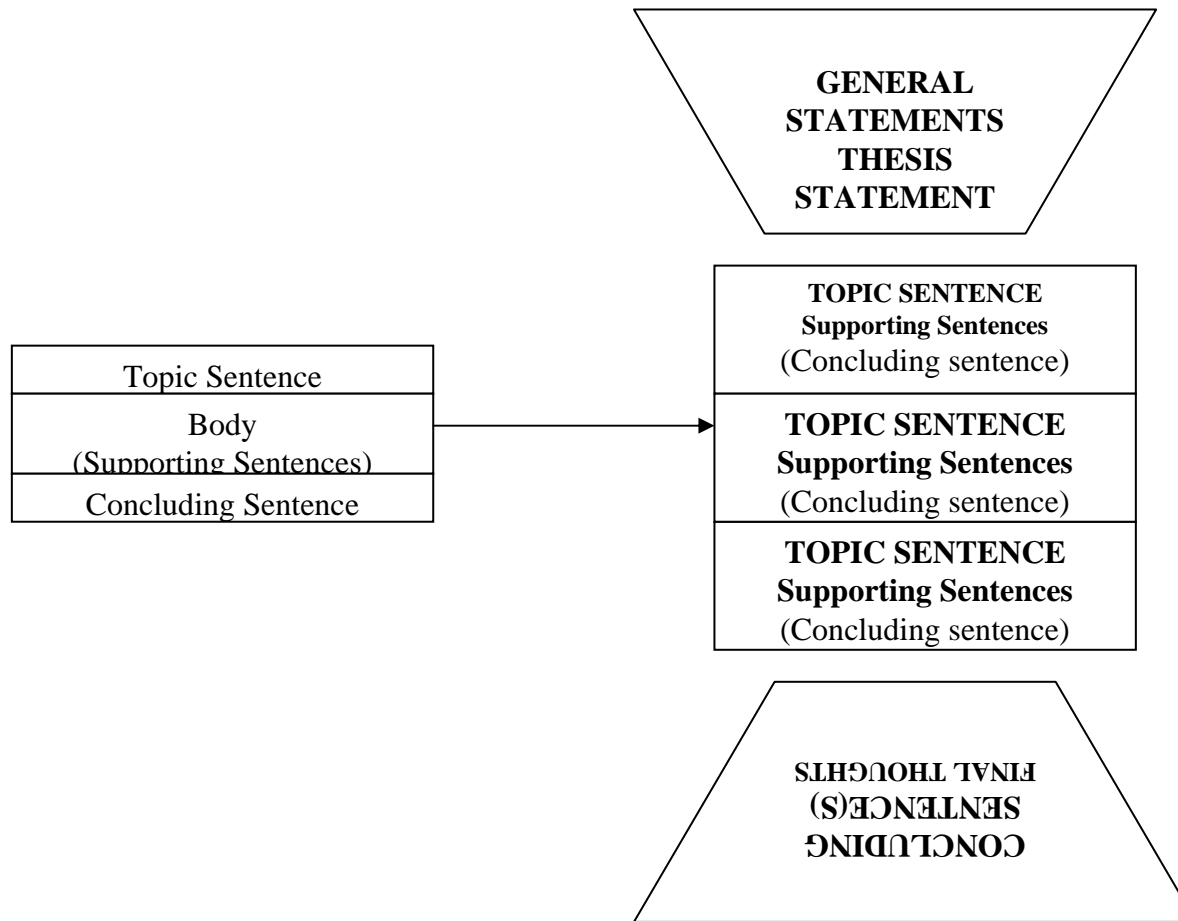
Figure 1: Histogram showing the percentage of people who participated in company training programs from 1999-2001 (Johnston, 2002).

- Position them in the text near where you refer to them
- Give them a clear label explaining what the diagram shows (Don't leave it up to the reader to work it out!)
- Identify the kind of chart: pie, scatter, histogram, etc
- Relegate peripheral diagrams to an Appendix and identify (see Appendix 3)

### Edit References in Text

- Check accuracy and spelling of all citations and reference details with the original.
- Check that ellipses (...) are used correctly.
- Check that reference style is consistent throughout.
- Check that quotation marks are used consistently.

# Relationship of Essay Parts





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### Good Paragraphs

- contain a **topic sentence** (sets up expectations for reader)
- only **ONE** idea is developed (unity)
- the sentences follow each other in a **logical sequence** (coherence)
- the sentences **develop** the topic sentence by giving evidence, supporting facts, and examples (support)

### Length:

- can vary considerably
- paragraphs that are too long are hard to read
- paragraphs that are too short make writing "choppy", or read like a list
- Sentences in a paragraph should be different lengths



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# Test of a Paragraph

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Should look like:

\_\_\_\_\_▪  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_▪

NOT like:

\_\_\_\_\_▪  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_▪



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## A Simple Example

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- Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important reasons: it is both beautiful and useful. First of all, gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion. For example, a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty three centuries ago. Another important characteristic of gold is its utility in industry and science. The most recent application of gold is in astronauts' suits.



## Compare the Examples

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#### SURVIVING CANCER (A)

- Progress is gradually being made in the fight against cancer. In the early 1900s, few cancer patients had any hope of long-term survival. In the 1930s, less than one in five cancer victims lived more than five years. In the 1950s, the ratio was one in four. Currently, the ratio is down to one in three. The gain from one in four to one in three represents about 58,000 lives saved each year.

#### SURVIVING CANCER (B)

- Progress is gradually being made in the fight against cancer. In the early 1900s, few cancer patients had any hope of long-term survival. But because of advances in medical technology, progress has been made so that currently one in three cancer patients survives. It has been proven that smoking is a direct cause of lung cancer. However, the battle has not yet been won. Although cures for some forms of cancer have been discovered, other forms of cancer are still increasing. Heart disease is also increasing.

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### Edit the Bibliography

- Make sure that the **full** details are given:
  - full name(s),
  - publisher and place of publication,
  - editor(s),
  - date of publication,
  - volume numbers,
  - edition,
  - inclusive page numbers (for journals).

### Edit Fonts

- Check usage of all bolds, underlined and italicised passages for consistency.
- Make sure you haven't overused italics. When overused they are less effective.
- Check section headings:
  - **HEADING 1**
  - **Heading 2**
  - *Heading 3*

- Now: Microediting

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### Edit for Purpose and Logical Development

- Check each chapter introduction and conclusion and separate sections.
- Do you do what you say you are going to do?
- Do you answer the essay question?
- Do you summarise the point(s) in the conclusion?
- Does the “thesis” of your thesis/essay come through in each of your chapters/sections?

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### Edit for Cohesion

- Check the links between paragraphs.
- Does the material “flow” from one to another.
- Do you have a topic sentence in each paragraph?
- Are you using “signpost” language to guide the reader: “Given this point” ... “First...” “Second...” , “Third...” “In conclusion...”
- Do you use subsections, numbered points?
- Are these consistently cross-referenced throughout?
- **READABILITY OF SENTENCES**



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## Martin's Rules

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- Rule 1: Don't overload the sentence (with too much information)
- Rule 2: Don't write long sentences (don't use too many words)
- Rule 3: Don't put the subject *anywhere else* than the start of the sentence
- Rule 4: Don't put "heavy" noun phrases before "light" noun phrases
- Rule 5: Don't separate subject and main verb
- Rule 6: Don't copy what you read (don't imitate)
- Rule 6: Don't forget to edit and proofread your work carefully
- Rule 7: Don't forget to punctuate



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# 1. Old before New Information

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- *Given information* = noun phrases in a sentence that refer to concepts/objects already mentioned or understood from the context.
- *New information* = noun phrases that refer to concepts/objects not yet mentioned.



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## Example

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### Version A

- *Many procedures to assess the adequacy of input data and test underlying assumptions of estimation measures were taken.*

### Version B

- There are many procedures used to test underlying assumptions and estimation measures. *These procedures were taken to assess the adequacy of input data.*



## 2. Light before Heavy

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- *A measure of the distance in multidimensional space is known as Mahalanobis distance which is the distance of each observation from the mean centre of the observations.*
- *Mahalanobis distance is a measure of observations taken and where they are taken from. To be specific, it is the distance in multidimensional space of observations. This measurement is normally taken from the mean centre of observations.*



## 3. Shorten your Sentences

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- Because the economy of each country is becoming a close relationship and every country need depend on some aspect of the economy in other country more or less every country needs these people who have the experience of studying overseas in order to develop the business with other countries.
- [Globalisation has affected the relationship between different countries and their economies.] Each country's economy [now] has a close relationship with the economies of other countries. Every country needs and depends on some aspect of the economy of other countries. [For example ...]
- There are two main reasons for this. Every country needs people who have the experience studying overseas. This experience helps to develop business with other countries [and this, in turn, improves local businesses].  
Secondly ...



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## 4. Put the Subject of the Sentence early

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#### Version A

- According to the lecture on "Engineering Ethics", Dr Dabke addressed why and how humans become professional.

#### Version B

- Dr Dabke addressed how and why humans became professionals in his lecture.



## 4. Pronoun and Noun Connection

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#### Version A

- The list consists of the names of Australian importing companies their addresses, telephone numbers and the person to contact. *The details* are important for many reasons.

#### Version B

- The list consists of the names of Australian importing companies their addresses, telephone numbers and the person to contact. *The names of the companies* are important for many reasons.

# Unreadability: Common Problems

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- Individual sentences are hard to understand because they are overloaded with information
- The main subject of individual sentences are placed too late in the sentence or the sentence is too long
- There is a poor connection between nouns and pronouns in a sentence
- There are no clear connections between sentences themselves or no topic sentence
- There is poor punctuation

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## Edit for Sense

- Make sure that each sentence is meaningfully clear and precise. Is it saying **exactly** what you want it to say or is it ambiguous or vague?
- Look out for redundancies, (“absolutely perfect”, “completely surrounded”, “serious crisis” )
- tautologies (“A comparative study covering both aspects” )
- empty expressions or “waffle” (“in terms of” , “reflected in” , “in regards to” )
- vague words (“factor” , “significant” “aspect” )
- empty modifiers (“huge” , “very” ).

**Such expressions are the mark of a poor writer!**

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#### Edit for Repetition

- Check all chapters for unnecessary repetition of concepts and ideas.

#### Edit for Acronyms and Jargon

- APEC, ASIO, OECD.
- These are to be explained clearly when first used.



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## Microediting (5)

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### Edit for Grammatical Errors

- Articles
- compounding nouns;
- lack of subject or verb in sentence;
- noun-verb agreement errors;
- split infinitives;
- plural-singular verb mistakes;
- tense errors;
- pronoun-noun agreement;
- misplacement of modifying verb;
- apostrophe usage in possessive expressions.

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**Edit for Spelling: BE AWARE OF THE LIMITATIONS OF SPELLING  
"CHECKERS"!**

**Spell Chequer Pome**

*I have a spelling checker,*

*It came with my P.C.*

*It clearly marks for my revue*

*Mistakes I cannot sea.*

*I've run this poem threw it*

*And I'm shore your please to no*

*Its letter perfect in it's weigh*

*My chequer tolled me sew.*

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### Edit for Punctuation

- Don't use commas, full-stops, semi-colons and colons indiscriminately. They often make the difference between meaningful and meaningless. Compare:

*'Charles I walked and talked five minutes after his head was cut off.'*

with:

*'Charles I walked and talked. Five minutes after, his head was cut off.'*



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## Rules of Writing (1)

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1. Make sure each pronoun agrees with their antecedent
2. Verbs has to agree in number with their subjects
3. Don't use no double negatives
4. Being bad grammar, a writer should not use dangling modifiers
5. About sentence fragments
6. Don't use commas, which aren't necessary
7. Try not to ever split infinitives, it is a practice to religiously avoid



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## Rules of Writing (2)

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1. It's important to use your apostrophe's correctly. Be sure it's correctly placed.
2. Proofread to see if you any words out
3. Correct spelling is important
4. Avoid noun agglomeration assembly mania
5. It behooves us all to avoid archaic expressions
6. A writer must not shift your point of view
7. It is above all critical not to be opportunistic and to employ excessive semantic distinctions or to use overly sophisticated terminology when the essential point is patently obvious.

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1. Don't use run on sentences you have always got to punctuate them in the right place
2. In letters essays theses and reports use commas to separate items in a list
3. Parenthetical words however should be enclosed in commas
4. Don't abbrev
5. In the case of a report check out that it is jargonwise A-OK



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## Rules of Writing (4)

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1. As far as incomplete constructions, they are wrong
2. About repetition, the repetition of a word might be real effective repetition—take, for instance, the repetition of “repetition”
3. Mixed metaphors are a pain in the neck and ought to be weeded out
4. Use parallel construction not only to be concise but also clarify



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## Rules of Writing (5)

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1. In my opinion, I think and author when he is writing should definitely not get into the habit of making use of too many unnecessary words that he does not really need in order to put his message across
2. However much a text makes you feel really in touch with your own feelings, avoid psycho-babble in essay-type situations
3. Last but not least, avoid cliches like the plague, lay off them

# Summary of Editing and Proofing

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- Take your work seriously: Check it!
- Use a Macro and Micro Editing Technique
- Edit forwards but proof backwards



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## Further Reading

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Joseph Williams' *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace* (Chicago UP, 1994)

Strunk and White's: *The Elements of Style* (Allyn & Bacon; 4th edition, 2000)

University of Purdue, OWL project (useful online grammatical exercises)