Tip Sheet Editing and Proofreading

Before we look at the topic of editing and proofreading, it is important to identify some beliefs you have about writing. Which of the students below has the best approach to writing? Which one has an approach that you take when writing assignments?

Student A has the best approach to writing. Writing assignments is not a one step process but one marked by **constant revision** of a piece of work until it is ready for submission. Although Student A makes up to 15 drafts, there is no magic number.

Student B needs to **change his approach to writing** if he is to do well in writing assignments. Unlike writing exams where students are expected to provide the ‘right’ answers under tight time constraints, assignments require students to start work weeks before the due date and spend time editing their work many times and proofreading it just before submission.

Student C does **not have a realistic view on writing**. There is no such thing as a writer who can write so well that there is no need to edit or proofread before submission. Even the most well published academics write many drafts before submitting to a journal for publication.

**Are editing and proofreading the same thing?**

Editing and proofreading are not the same thing.

**What is editing?**

Editing involves going over your writing, and changing things to make sure that your content is presented as clearly as possible, structured appropriately and has a suitable style. It is a broad process concerned with:

- content
- clarity
- logic of argument, structure and style.
What is proofreading?
Proofreading is a final micro process where you read for:

- spelling
- punctuation
- grammatical errors.

Can these skills be learnt?
The good news is these skills can be learnt. With practice, you will become an expert at editing and proofreading your work.

You can download and use ECU’s Editing and Proofreading Checklist which lists common editing and proofreading elements that you need to be aware of before submitting an assignment.

Here are some additional tips for editing and proofreading your work:

- Leave the text alone for at least 24 hours - so you can approach it with fresh eyes.
- Edit and proofread from a printed copy of the text – you will find many more errors compared to reading on the screen.
- Change the look of the document – font size, spacing, which should help you spot even more mistakes.
- Find a quiet place without distractions – so you can focus.
- Read the text aloud – many students find this a more effective way of correcting their grammar.
- Work in short blocks of time – less than 20 minutes.
- Keep a personal list of your common errors and check these off as you check your work.

Remember! If you have a draft of your assignment ready, you can attend an assignment drop-in session to get feedback on your writing before you submit it. For information about assignment drop in -sessions, visit the Academic Skills Centre community Blackboard site.

Contact
If you have any questions about this material, please contact ECU’s Learning Advisers at learningadviser@ecu.edu.au