Proofreading tips

Proofreading is checking your work for minor errors; editing is checking the content and structure of your work. Both are essential to complete your work to a high standard. Try to edit first, and proofread later. 'Minor' errors (e.g. the occasional spelling or grammatical error) can make a difference of a grade in some courses, whilst 'major' errors (e.g. misuse of words so that the meaning is unclear) can have an even larger impact; so be sure to devote separate time to editing, and then proofreading your work.

What to look for in proofreading:

- Spelling or grammar errors
- Incomplete or long sentences
- Incorrect capitalisations
- Unclear phrasing, or inaccurate or overly repetitive use of words or terminology
- Informal style
- Formatting issues (font changes, line spacing, etc.)
- Referencing (check punctuation, consistent spelling of authors' names, use of page numbers)
- Punctuation
- Brevity (short and to the point)

Tips for proofreading:

- Try reading it out loud.
  - Do you need to take a breath in the middle of the sentence? If so, it's too long.
  - Does each sentence make sense on its own? Does it make sense in context with the surrounding sentences?
- Print it out, at least once.
- Leave a time lapse between completing your draft and proofreading it.
- To identify spelling errors, try reading backwards, from the bottom of the page to the top. Look over the shape of the words to identify ones that stand out.
  - Use Spellcheck in Microsoft carefully. It will not pick up on using the wrong word (e.g. 'affect' and 'effect'), it does get some grammatical points wrong, and it often suggests the wrong word as a replacement. So use carefully. Other apps such as Grammarly may help too but will also have their limitations.
- Divide up proofreading tasks. Read it once for clarity, then again for grammar and punctuation, then again for referencing. You will pick up on different things each time.
- Check use of words:
  - Have you used the same word multiple times in one sentence? Try to avoid this.

- Have you used synonyms accurately? Repetition may be preferable to using the wrong word, especially for technical or professional terminology.
- Is your meaning completely obvious? Could someone interpret your idea differently?

- Compare final references to in-text: they must correspond. Make sure none are missing.
- Review your final references against the referencing guide for the system you are using.
- Swap assignments with a colleague. Read their assignment; circle anything unclear, that doesn't follow logically, or needs evidence. Don't discuss it with them - do this in the revisions.
- Leave plenty of time! Proofreading takes several days. This means that you actually need to aim to finish a rough draft about a week in advance of the deadline.