

# How to Proofread Your Work

**Proofreading your work means to read it over again, looking for errors. View your work as a living document that can grow and change. It is not finished yet!**

## Proofreading Rules:

- **Never think your first draft is your final draft!** Always read it over and correct any errors before handing it in to your teacher.
- **Do NOT rely only on spell-check.** Spell-check only finds words that are spelled wrong, not words that are misplaced or used in the wrong way. Spell-check will also not tell you when you use the wrong version of a word (for instance “there,” “their,” and “they're”).
- If you are sick and tired of working on your writing, then **put it down and give yourself some time and space.** *But* come back to it in a day or two.
- **Get someone else's opinion.** While giving yourself some space, ask a friend or family member to read your work for you.
- **Read your work out loud.** Sometimes you will *hear* mistakes that you don not *see* on paper. Things often look better than they sound. This is especially true of poetry, where rhythm is heard, not seen.

## Proofreading Checklist (things to look for while proof reading your work):

\_\_\_\_\_ **1. Spelling and grammar:** *is everything spelled correctly and do you use proper grammar?* Some common grammar issues include:

- Commas are in the wrong place or missing
- Sentences are too long (these are called “run-on sentences;” they need punctuation)
- Other punctuation errors
- Capitalization errors
- Tense confusion (some words are in present tense while others are in past. For example: “She is beautiful when she wore that dress” “Is” is present, “wore” is past).

\_\_\_\_\_ **2. Repetition:** *are your word choices interesting or do you keep using the same words over and over?* Do you repeat your ideas over and over? Repetition is boring. Make your work exciting by using different words and only saying each idea once.

\_\_\_\_\_ **3. Logic:** *does what you have written make sense?* Sometimes things make sense in our minds but are hard to explain on paper. This is why it is good to read your work out loud or have other people edit it. It might make sense to you, but not to them.

\_\_\_\_\_ **4. Plagiarism:** *Did you cite all of your sources?* If you did not you may be guilty of plagiarism. Always give credit to your sources.

\_\_\_\_\_ **5. Description:** *Do you use many verbal images?* Can other people reading your work picture what you are saying? Paint a word picture for your readers by using vivid imagery.

**Exercise A: Practice Proofreading**

Using the checklist above, proofread the following paragraph. Pretend it is your own work and edit it. Circle and correct any mistakes you find, as well as anything that could be made better.

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Little Red Riding Hood. She was a good child, and almost always did what her Mother told her to do. One day her Mother says to go to her Grandmother's house, and give her a basket full of fresh baked bread and fresh cooked chicken soup, this was all because Grandma was so sick. So, the little girl went to visit her sick Grandmother and give her the food. On the way there, Little Red had to walk through the woods, which was always scary, but not if she stuck to the path, like her Mother said. But there were all of these beautiful flowers beside the path, and deep in the woods, and Little Red thought to herself, what wonderful flowers! I will pick some for Grandma. So, thinking only of her grandma's joy at the flowers, the little girl left the path, forgetting about the dangers of the woods.

**Exercise B: Proofreading for Your Peers**

Trade poems or stories with a classmate. Make sure you give him/her a poem or story that you want to improve. Use the "proofreading" checklist to edit your friend's writing, and to provide helpful suggestions.

**Corrections for Exercise A: the mistakes are in bold and the corrections are written under each line).**

Once **apon** a time **their** was a **little** girl named **Little** red Riding Hood. She was a good child, and

sp (upon) sp (there) repetition (little) Capital (Red)

almost always did what her Mother told her to do. One day **he** Mother **says** to go to her Grandmother's

Typo (her) Tense shift to present in this sentence

house, and **give** her a basket full of freshly **backed** bread and **fresh cooked chicken soup**, this was all

sp (baked) grammar: adverb needed (freshly) awkward phrase (is soup cooked?)

**cause** Grandma was so sick. So, the **little** girl went to visit her **sick** Grandmother and give her the food.

slang (because) repetition (little, sick, Grandmother)

On the way **their**, Red had to walk through the woods, **which was always scary, but not if she**

sp (there) logic, grammar, & tense (what does the "which" phrase refer to? Walking or the woods? and the tense shifts again).

**stuck to the path, like her mother said. But** there were all of these beautiful flowers **beside the path,**

inconsistent capitals (Mother) Using "But" to start a sentence, when not needed for emphasis logic and unnecessary commas (what does "and deep in the woods describe? Why are there commas here?)

**and deep in the woods, and** Little Red thought to herself, **what wonderful flowers! I will pick some**

repetition (and) missing punctuation (thoughts like these should be in quotation marks)

**for Grandma. So**, thinking only of her **grandma's** joy at the flowers, the **little** girl left the path,

Repetition (So) Inconsistent capitals (Grandma's) Repetition (little)

forgetting about the dangers of the **woods**.

sp (forgetting) repetition (woods)

\*\*\* Lack of vivid imagery throughout the paragraph\*\*\*