

LET'S TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT  
*Editing for Clarity and  
Proofreading for Correctness*



**It is not wise to violate the rules  
until you know how to observe them.**

**--T. S. Eliot**

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## **Defining Our Terms**

- Editing: To prepare a text before taking it “public”
- Proofreading: To read (copy or proof) in order to find errors and make corrections
- Correctness: Freedom from error

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## **Editing Strategies**

- ✓ Use spell check and grammar check to help spot possible errors
- ✓ Refer to the “Most Common Errors” list for patterns of errors you are most likely to make
- ✓ Trace the line of reasoning for each error
- ✓ Check your word choice
- ✓ Check to see if you have documented quotations and paraphrases properly
- ✓ Check for gender inclusive language

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## **20 Most Common Errors**

1. Missing comma after an introductory element
2. Vague pronoun reference
3. Missing comma in a compound sentence
4. Wrong word
5. Missing comma(s) with a nonrestrictive element
6. Wrong or missing verb ending
7. Wrong or missing preposition
8. Comma splice
9. Missing or misplaced possessive apostrophe
10. Unnecessary shift in tenses
11. Unnecessary shift in pronoun
12. Sentence fragment
13. Wrong tense or verb form
14. Lack of agreement between subject and verb
15. Missing comma in a series
16. Lack of agreement between pronoun and antecedent
17. Unnecessary comma(s) with a restrictive element
18. Fused sentence
19. Misplaced or dangling modifier
20. Its/It’s confusion

## Proofreading Categories

- General (deleting, inserting, or spelling out)
  - Paragraphing
  - Position and Spacing
  - Punctuation
  - Style of type
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## Helpful Proofreading Strategies

- ✓ Read backwards
  - ✓ Add paragraph breaks after each sentence to isolate it on the screen
  - ✓ Read with a “cover,” one line at a time
  - ✓ Read aloud
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## Additional Resources

- Use AutoCorrect to help mark patterns
  - Refer to a dictionary, thesaurus, and grammar and usage guides
  - Look at examples of “correct” writing you can use as models
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## Need Some Help?

### People

- Scheduling an Appointment at the Writing Studio <http://uwp.duke.edu/wstudio>
- Scheduling an Appointment with a Librarian <http://www.lib.duke.edu/reference/refq.htm>

### Print & Electronic Guides

- *Editing Made Easy: Secrets of the professionals* by Bruce Kaplan
  - *Go Ahead . . . Proof It!* by K. D. Sullivan
  - *Line by Line* by Claire Cook
  - Help with Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling:  
<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/index2.htm>
  - Details on 20 most common errors:  
<http://www.bedfordsmartins.com/lunsford/twenty.html>
  - Check “Resources for Writers” at <http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio> for helpful links
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