

c Analysis

What section-by-section strategies can I use?

As noted in the previous step, it is important to be active in your proofreading. It can therefore be highly productive to think of a specific set of questions to ask yourself about each of the different sections of the essay. If the answer to any of the questions is 'no' (or you are not sure), you need to consider rewriting parts of that section. Questions that you might consider include:

■ Does your introduction:

- provide an overview of the whole essay?
- indicate the direction in which the essay will be going?
- engage the reader's interest?

■ Do your body paragraphs:

- focus on the main points of the essay?
- present a consistent argument throughout?
- give the quantity and quality of detail necessary to support your ideas?

■ Does your conclusion:

- highlight the main ideas of the essay?
- leave the reader with a positive impression of your work?
- answer the question?

Top ten general tips for proofreading

1. Print the essay out. It is very difficult to proofread properly on your computer screen.
2. Look for mistakes in groups. Mistakes will often come together, so if you find one, there may be others nearby.
3. Use different-coloured pens to indicate different types of mistakes (e.g., blue for grammar, red for language, etc.).
4. If you are having problems with particular sections of the text, read them aloud. It is often easier to hear mistakes than to read them.
5. Get others involved in proofreading. Work with a colleague or friend to increase the effectiveness (and interest) of the task.
6. Leave time between finishing writing and proofreading – 48 hours is ideal.
7. Proofread more than once – you will not find all your mistakes the first time.
8. Search actively for your mistakes.
9. Note the comments from the marker of your previous essays. You may have repeated previous mistakes.
10. Include proofreading in your planning. Do not see it as an 'extra' but as a fundamental aspect of your work.

Using these questions, we can say that the conclusion outlined in part B is problematic for the following reasons:

- It did not answer the second part of the question.
- It did not highlight the main points of the essay (e.g., it stated that there were four key reasons why essays should be proofread but only focused on one point, in too much detail).
- It is poorly written, leaving a bad impression (e.g., vague language such as It seems like a very important area to focus on).

What general proofreading strategies can I use?

As well as a section-by-section review, it is important to consider a number of cross-cutting themes that run throughout the essay. To ensure that the essay's argument and ideas are solid, and that an appropriate academic style has been used, you need a detailed analysis of these themes. The table identifies some themes and strategies you can use to analyze them.

Theme	Questions to ask	Strategy and rationale	Support
Argument	Do you justify all your points? Do you use appropriate evidence?	Criticize your own essay. Play devil's advocate: read your essay with the <i>deliberate</i> intention of finding as many problems as possible.	Steps 6, 7, 25, 28
Structure	Is there a clear path through the essay? Does it have a good backbone?	Read the topic sentences. Read the first sentence of every paragraph. From this, can you understand the main direction of the essay?	Steps 18–20
Layout	Have you laid out the essay correctly? What about bold , <i>italics</i> and <u>underline</u> ? Is the essay spaced correctly?	Visually check the essay. Look at the essay as a painting. Ignore the actual words and content and decide whether it <i>looks</i> like an essay. Is there enough white space? Are there any paragraphs which are too long or too short? Is the correct font used?	Check your departmental handbook.
Relevance	Is everything you write necessary and important, or could some parts be deleted?	Write the essay title on a piece of paper and reread your essay. An essay must answer the question. Be constantly reminded of the title. Delete or rewrite any sections as needed.	Step 13
Grammar	Are all the tenses you have used appropriate? What about articles? Is there any MOTHER-TONGUE INFLUENCE ?	Read the text backwards, sentence by sentence. This strategy will force you to only look at the words and to focus on the SYNTAX rather than the <i>meaning</i> . Reading the text aloud can be particularly effective.	Steps 41–45
Clarity	Can the reader understand your essay, or is it very difficult to understand the core meaning?	Write a 100-word summary of your own essay. Write this based only on what is in your essay (i.e., on what you have <i>written</i> rather than what you <i>know</i>). If you find this difficult, it may be that the essay lacks clarity. You could ask a friend to do this, and in return summarize their essay.	Step 29, Step 37
Language	Are there words or phrases which you use too frequently? Is the language the right level of formality?	Search your essay. Use your computer to search for terms which you know you tend to overuse (e.g., in Word, use <i>Ctrl-F</i>). This will show you all the places where these words appear, and you can make appropriate changes.	Step 36