

How to Proofread an Academic Paper

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Writing [academic papers](#) is a major part of education, and basic writing skills are vital. Knowing how to [proofread a paper](#) before submission can help eliminate errors.

When heading to turn in an academic paper, many students fail to see the small grammatical and spelling mistakes left in the writing; however, these errors can make the difference between a good grade and a bad one. Most teachers will check for the accuracy of the structure writing itself, not just the arguments made within the paper. Having a well-written paper is key to maintaining good grades.

Simple Grammar Errors

Most teachers are on the lookout for simple grammar mistakes when grading academic papers, and few things are more likely to get marked down than errors that could be corrected quickly. Although word processing programs have grammar-checking tools, they are not always accurate, so remembering some simple rules can make a huge difference in a paper.

- “Your” is a possessive form. Example: Your dog got out of the yard again. “You’re” is a contraction of the words “you” and “are”. Example: You’re going to have to

catch the dog.

- The word “their” is a possessive form. Example: Their dog got out of the yard again. “They’re” is a contraction of the words “they” and “are”. Example: They’re going to have to catch the dog. “There” is an adverb. Example: The dog is over there.
- A lot is a two-word phrase referring to a large number of things. “A lot” is not a word. To allow is to hand out or distribute something.
- “Its” is a possessive form. Example: Its fur is all wet from being out in the rain. “It’s” is a contraction of the words “it” and “is”. Example: It’s raining.
- “To” is a preposition. Example: I’m going to the store. “Too” is an adverb. Example: It’s too hot to walk. “Two” is a number. Example: I bought two milkshakes.
- “Than” is a comparative preposition. Example: Harry is taller than Henry. “Then” is an adverb. Example: Harry left, and then Henry followed him.

Simple Punctuation Errors

The rules of punctuation can seem very complicated but are not actually all that confusing if a few simple rules are followed. Having a paper for e.g. a [college application](#) that is punctuated correctly will not only cut down on confusion, but it also help a student maintain better grades.

- Apostrophes are used to denote possession, not plurality. Incorrect: Moms brownies smell delicious. Correct: Mom’s brownies smell delicious.
- When writing a date, this is correct: 1920s or ‘20s.
- A semicolon (;) is used to separate independent clauses of a sentence; if the part of the sentence following the semicolon could be its sentence, then the semicolon has been used correctly.
- A colon is often used to start a list, explanation, or quotation.

Proofreading

Students should take time to carefully proofread academic papers before handing them in. Proofreading involves very little effort, but a good deal of focus. Reading the paper aloud will help students catch errors that might have otherwise been missed like omitted or repeated words. Going over each word and sentence to be sure it is grammatically correct and properly spelled will not take much time, but it can make a difference in the grade of the paper. Having other students [proofread a paper](#) is also an effective strategy for catching errors.

Although the rules of grammar are myriad, adhering to the most basic rules for academic papers will make a huge difference in a student’s grade. Most word processors catch the basic spelling, grammatical, and [punctuation errors](#) made by students, but there is no substitute for a student willing to check over the work individually.

Conclusion

Proofreading academic papers is key to good grades; many students fail to recognize small mistakes that can make a difference.

Important grammar tips include remembering the possessive forms of “your”, “their”, and “its” and avoiding the use of “alot.”

Punctuation rules such as proper use of the semicolon and colon should be followed.

Careful proofreading by reading aloud can help identify omitted or repeated words, and having other students look over a paper is also helpful.

Cite this article

dianehwong2, How to Proofread an Academic Paper. Enago Academy. 2023/11/22. <https://www.enago.com/academy/guestposts/dianehwong2/proofread-an-academic-paper/>