Editing and proofreading

Refining your own work is an essential skill, and an excellent way to continually improve your writing.

This guide covers the difference between editing and proofreading, and provides checklists you can use to review your work before submission.

Editing focuses on improving the 'big picture' of your assignment. It is how you ensure you have fully addressed the task requirements, and involves making structural changes to your writing and checking the logic and flow. **Proofreading** focuses on specific details like spelling, sentence structure, and referencing.

Step 1: Reread your instructions, question, and rubric, so you can approach the task with clarity about your aims and purpose.
Step 2: Use the checklists as a starting point to refine your work.
Tip: To spot errors more easily, read your text aloud, and take breaks between writing, editing, and proofreading.

Editing

Structural aspects
- ☐ Introduction clearly states the topic and how it will be covered.
- ☐ Paragraphs have clear topic sentences and present information in a logical order.
- ☐ Conclusion sums up the main points and has a takeaway message.

Topic coverage
- ☐ All aspects of the question are answered.
- ☐ All key terms and concepts are defined.
- ☐ Every point on the rubric is fully addressed.

Proofreading

Formatting
Check for consistency of:
- ☐ Heading levels
- ☐ Diagrams and tables
- ☐ Margins and indentation
- ☐ Footnotes and block quotes (if used)

Referencing, citations
- ☐ All quotes and paraphrases are cited.
- ☐ All sources are in the reference list.
- ☐ All reference details are complete.
- ☐ All in-text citations and reference list entries are in the required style.

Analysis & argument

- ☐ Analysis presents an evaluation (not just description).
- ☐ Argument is supported by sufficient evidence, and a range of sources.

Quoting, paraphrasing

- ☐ Quotations are applied to your specific context, and their significance is clearly discussed.
- ☐ Paraphrased content retains the same meaning as the original.

Language use

- ☐ Sentences are complete and separated by appropriate punctuation.
- ☐ Spelling is accurate and consistent, in Australian English.
- ☐ Academic tone used throughout (formal, objective, impersonal, concise and precise).

Personal checklist

Add your own items to each of these checklists based on feedback you have received in the past.