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How to Proofread Your Thesis

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You just finished writing a 300-page master's thesis or PhD dissertation. It took you two years of late-night researching, organizing citations, and coming up with mountains of data to support your thesis.

Before you impress the committee with your text, you have to proofread this massive tome several times. The journalist's aphorism, "Edit, edit again, and edit some more" is an absolute truth when your professional future is on the line.



With this in mind, here are some practical tips on how to proofread your thesis or dissertation.

Review the Rules

Before you set out to write your thesis, the committee laid out the rules. Review the style set forth by your academic institution. [Depending on your department](#), your thesis or dissertation may follow American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), or Chicago/Turabian style.

Review the style for your thesis and go over the major guidelines. Make sure you didn't miss any key elements you must include in your thesis or dissertation. After you re-familiarize yourself with the rules, read through your work once to see if anything seems out of place. After that, go through your text more carefully.

Determine Your Method

You didn't write your thesis or dissertation overnight, nor can you proofread this work in one sitting. Go through your work [methodically in little chunks](#) at a time. Eventually, you come to the last page.

Some people prefer to sit in front of a computer screen and edit, while others print a copy to physically write proofreading marks. Whichever works better for you, that's what you employ. Remember where you leave off in the proofreading process by making a mark on the paper or the screen.

You must create an index for your text anyway, so take advantage of this effort and proofread your paper at the same time. Start with the first page and work through the first 10 pages or whatever small portion works well for you. Then, it's time to note errors in your text and your organizational structure.

Know What to Watch For

When proofreading your thesis or dissertation, you already know to watch for errors such as misspellings, grammatical mistakes, and punctuation. However, you must also examine your paper's [organizational structure](#).

Look over each paragraph to see if every detail is essential to your writing. When you discover something you don't need, remove it. Add any omitted information into your thesis or dissertation at the appropriate point.

Each paragraph should flow into the next, and each paragraph has its own topic sentence and conclusion before moving onto the next one. Does each paragraph fit into the overall scope of your thesis or dissertation? Does each detail support what you write? Proofreading lets you narrow your focus to get rid of extraneous information.

By the time you reach the end of proofreading your thesis or dissertation, every paragraph should fit into your work. Don't forget to use every tool at your disposal to help analyze your text.

Utilize Tools

Online tools or computer software look for various problems in your work. Some tools are free to use once or twice, while others require a subscription for premium access.

- [Grammarly](#) contains free tools through its website or a Google Chrome extension.
- [Readable.io](#) counts the words in your text, examines your readability level, and gives you a score that correlates to a particular reading level. Your thesis or dissertation should have a college reading level for academic work.
- [Slick Write](#) represents another online tool that critiques your writing, analyzes for passive voice, and even judges the flow of your writing.
- [Proofread Bot](#) lets you paste text to check for errors.
- [Ginger](#) receives high marks from users for its thoroughness and user-friendly interface.

If writing isn't your strong point, you can have someone else proofread your thesis or dissertation. The

Remember a Few General Tips

Sometimes, it pays to step back and take some time away from proofreading your thesis or dissertation. Give yourself a break for a few days to recharge before looking at your text again. Examine your text at least three times while looking for grammar, flow, style, and structure.

Find a quiet corner to proofread. Consider your university library, an empty lecture hall or some noise-cancelling headphones with classical music at home.

Don't rush through your proofreading process. Give yourself plenty of time before your deadline to proofread your thesis or dissertation, and budget your days and weeks accordingly. Eventually, your hard work pays off with an accepted text and your brand-new degree!

What advice do you have to share on proofreading your thesis? Let us know in the comments below.

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