

# Proofreading and Evaluation

by Sophia



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to put the finishing touches on your writing after you have made major revisions and edits. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

## 1. Proofreading

In traditional publishing, proofreading and design are the final stages a book undergoes before it is published. If the earlier steps of research, organizing, writing, revising, and formatting have been done carefully, proofreading and design should go smoothly.

Now is not the time to go back and revise a document's content, or to experiment with changes in format. Instead, the emphasis is on catching any typographical errors that have slipped through the revision process, and "pouring" the format into a design that will enhance your written message.

By now you have completed a general and specific review of the document, with attention to detail. You may have made changes, and most word processing programs will allow you to track those changes across several versions and authors. If you work in an environment where a document exists as a hard copy during the revision process, you may use or see handwritten proofreading symbols.

Professional proofreaders often use standard markings that serve to indicate where changes need to be made on a physical document. Some of today's word processing programs incorporate many proofreading symbols in their menus. Strong **technology skills** ensure you are aware of tools like this and that you are able to utilize them to catch errors.

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## 2. Elements of Evaluation

If you are asked to review a document, design is an element that deserves consideration. While most of our attention has focused on words (i.e., sentence construction and common errors), design can have a strong impact on the representation and presentation of information.

### 2a. Framing

Framing refers to how information is presented, including margins, line justifications, and template expectations. Just as a frame creates a border around a painting, highlighting part of the image while hiding the margins, the frame of a page influences how information is received.

Margins create space around the edge and help draw attention to the content. One-inch margins are standard, but differences in margin widths will depend on the assignment requirements.

➔ **EXAMPLE** A brief letter may have margins as wide as two inches so that the body of the letter fills up the stationery in a more balanced fashion.

Template expectations are distinct from audience expectations, though they are often related. Most software programs have templates for basic documents, including letters, reports, and resumés.

## 2b. Typefaces

The creation of the face of the type, as in a typing machine or printing press, has long been both an art and a science.



### DID YOU KNOW

In past centuries, carvings of the face of the type in copperplate, where ink was applied and then pressed to paper, created intricate and intriguing images designed to communicate style, prestige, status, and formality with the communication of words and symbols. We no longer use copper or hot lead type, but the typeface still exists as a medium for communication in addition to the word itself.

There are two general categories of typeface: serif and sans serif. "Sans" means without, so the emphasis here is on whether the face of the type has a serif or not. A serif is a small cross line, often perpendicular to the stroke of the letter, that is decorative but also serves the useful purpose of differentiating characters that could otherwise look similar.

For this reason, serif typefaces, such as Times New Roman and Garamond, are often easier to read, especially when the font size is small. Sans serif fonts, such as Arial and Helvetica, lack the serif and can be harder to read in long text sequences. They are most commonly used for headings. However, when text is to be read electronically (on the screen of a computer or other device), serifs can tend to break up, so sans serif typefaces can be a better choice.

The rule of thumb, or common wisdom, is to limit your document to two typefaces, contrasting sans serif (headings) with text (serif). Take care not to use a font that is hard to read, creating an unnecessary barrier for your reader. Also, use a font that conveys the tone of your professional message to enhance your effectiveness.

## 2c. Paragraphs

Paragraphs are the basic organizational unit for presenting and emphasizing the key points in a document. Effective paragraphs can provide an effective emphasis strategy, but the placement within the page can also influence recall and impact.

The first point presented is often the second in importance, the second point is the least important, and the third point in a series of three is often the most important. People generally recall the last point presented, and tend to forget or ignore the content in the middle of a sequence. Use this strategy to place your best point in the most appropriate location.

A lengthy document that consists of paragraph after paragraph can become monotonous, making reading a chore and obscuring pieces of information that need to stand out.

To give the document visual variety and to emphasize key information, consider the following strategies:

- Bullets

- Numbers
- Boldface
- Italics
- Underlining
- Capitalization (all caps)

Remember, however, that using all caps for body text (as opposed to headings) is often considered rude, like shouting, particularly in electronic communications.

## 2d. Visual Aids

If you have the luxury of including visual aids, such as graphics and pictures, in your document, take care to make sure that the verbal and visual messages complement each other.

The visual should illustrate the text, and should be placed near the words so that the relationship is immediately clear. Sometimes during editing, a photograph will get pushed to the next page, leaving the relevant text behind and creating discontinuity. This creates a barrier for your reader, so avoid it if possible.

## 2e. Interactivity

Finally, documents increasingly have an interactivity component that can lead the reader in many directions. Providing links can facilitate interactivity, and that depth of resources can be a distinct advantage when writing documents to be read on a computer.

However, be careful when integrating a web link within your document, as your audience may leave your message behind and not return. If you create a link associated with clicking on a photograph or icon, make sure that the scroll-over message is clear and communicates whether the reader will leave the current page.

As we have seen in many design elements, there are strengths and weaknesses associated with each option and it requires a skilled business writer to create and deliver an effective message.



## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **proofreading** is the final stage of polishing your written document after revising and formatting. Besides scanning for typographic errors, there are visual and functional **elements of evaluation** that should be attended to. These include checking the **framing** (e.g, margins and font justification), **typeface** selection, **paragraph** presentation, placement of **visual aids**, and any **interactivity** components.

Best of luck in your learning!

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