How to proofread

Improving your proofreading skills can enhance the overall standard of your work ensuring you submit the best version. However, you need to allow time to make changes, therefore planned proofreading days before your deadline is better than reading your work through quickly at the last minute.

What to proofread for

You will need to proofread your assignment several times to check:

- That you have met the brief and the learning outcomes
- That your work logically flows from one section to another and you have adopted the required structure
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar are correct.
- The vocabulary is precise and words have not been omitted or certain words overly used.
- That the citations link through to the reference list and the departmental referencing style is consistently used
- The writing format is consistent throughout, including layout, text font and size.

Plan time for proofreading

You need to give yourself a break from your writing to proofread well. Do not try to proofread as you write, or directly after writing, as you will be too close to your work to see the errors. Plan where and when you are going to proofread and avoid distractions.

Ways to proofread

1. Read your work aloud with a short pause for a comma and a longer pause for a gull stop. When you trip over your tongue you will probably find punctuation or sentence construction errors. You can try recording yourself and when listening back, annotate a paper copy.
2. Ask a friend to read through your work highlighting areas which are unclear. Do not ask someone to pick out individual errors as this is a skill you need to develop yourself.
3. Print out a copy of your work and use a ruler to move down the page checking a line at a time.
4. Read through each paragraph separately to ensure they have to the correct structure:
   - An opening sentence which introduces the topic of the paragraph
   - A number of sentences that logically develops that topic
   - The final closing sentence which concludes the paragraph and, if possible, leads into the next topic
5. Read your work from the from the bottom up checking the grammar and punctuation of each sentence in turn without bothering about meaning of the whole paragraph.
6. Review your work using the spell checker facility but make sure you have selected English (UK). Be aware that spellings may not be correct depending upon the context the word is used in. Homophones such as whether and weather, can be an issue.
7. You could try text-to-speech software which reads text documents aloud. This may help you to hear errors. The voices are quite artificial and lack intonation.