

## Proofreading & Editing Tips

### A compilation of advice from experienced proofreaders and editors

#### General tips for proofing

- Read it out loud and also silently.
- Read it backwards to focus on the spelling of words.
- Use a spell checker and grammar checker as a first screening, but don't depend on them.
- Have others read it.
- Read it slowly.
- Point with your finger to read one word at a time.
- Don't proof for every type of mistake at once—do one proof for spelling, another for missing/additional spaces, consistency of word usage, font sizes, etc.
- Keep a list of your most common errors (or of the writers you are proofing) and proof for those on separate "trips."
- If you are editing within Word, use the "track changes" or "mark changes" function to make your comments apparent to other reviewers (additions and deletions can be set to appear in different colors).
- Print it out and read it.
- Read down columns in a table, even if you're supposed to read across the table to use the information. Columns may be easier to deal with than rows.
- Give a copy of the document to another person and keep a copy yourself. Take turns reading it out loud to each other. While one of you reads, the other one follows along to catch any errors and awkward-sounding phrases. This method also works well when proofing numbers and codes.
- Double check fonts that are unusual (italic, bold, or otherwise different).
- Be careful that your eyes don't skip from one error to the next obvious error, missing subtle errors in between.
- Double check proper names.
- Double check little words: "or," "of," "it," and "is" are often interchanged.
- Double check whenever you're sure something is right—certainty is dangerous.
- Closely review page numbers and other footer/header material for accuracy and correct order.

#### Editing for Content

- Ask yourself who, what, when, where, why, and how when reading for content. Does the text answer all the questions you think it should?
- Highlight the sentences that best answer these questions, just so you can see if the facts flow in logical order.
- Do the math, do the math, and then do the math again. Somewhere between the screen and the printer 2+2 often becomes 3.
- Make a list of "bugaboo" words and do a search for them before final proof. Include every swear word, words related to product terminology, and other words that pop up on occasion. Then do a "find" for all these words.
- Actually do every step in procedures to make sure they are complete, accurate, and in correct order. Count the number of steps a list promises to make sure they are all there.
- Check that figure numbers match their references in the text and are sequential.

#### Preparing yourself to proof or edit

- Write at the end of the day; edit first thing in the morning. (Usually, getting some sleep in between helps.)
- Listen to music or chew gum. Proofing can be boring business and it doesn't require much critical thinking, though it does require extreme focus and concentration. Anything that can relieve your mind of some of the pressure, while allowing you to still keep focused, is a benefit.
- Spend a half-hour a month reviewing grammar rules.

- Read something else between edits. This helps clear your head of what you expect to read and allows you to read what really is on the page.
- Make a list of things to watch for—a kind of "to do" list—as you edit.

**LR Communication Systems, Inc.** Ph: 908-464-1231 • Fax: 908-464-1350 • [mail@LRcom.com](mailto:mail@LRcom.com) • [www.LRcom.com](http://www.LRcom.com)  
 Copyright © 1999, LR Communication Systems, Inc. All rights reserved.

### Helpful Prairie View A&M University Style Tips

- Do not place a space between A&M.
- Prairie View A&M University is A Member of The Texas A&M University System. (Not a Part; not a Component).
- When referring to the University on second reference or informally – PVAMU should be used. (Not PV or PVU).
- PVAMU should always be referred to as a university or an institution. (Not a college)
- Use P.O. Box, with periods (AP style).
- Use bachelor’s degree and master’s degree (with apostrophes); Use doctoral degree or doctorate.
- Abbreviations of degrees should not include periods or spaces (e.g. PhD, BA, MBA, EdD, JD,DBA)
- Lowercase bachelor of science, bachelor of arts, master of arts, etc. (unless abbreviated as above).
- Spell out numbers from one to nine and use numerals for all higher numbers. However, spell out a number at the beginning of a sentence.
- Use commas with numbers in the thousands (e.g. 1,325).
- Spell out and round off numbers in the millions. (49,850,000 would be approximately 50 million)
- Spell out the word “percent,” but not the numeral preceding “percent” (e.g. 99 percent, 5 percent).
- Use numerals to denote ages of people (e.g.) The student was 18 when he graduated.
- Ages expressed as an adjective before a noun use hyphens (e.g.) They have a 6-year-old daughter.
- Use numerals for credit hours. (This course carries 6 hours of academic credit)
- Capitalize the word “state” only in formal reference to the state as a legal institution. (e.g. the State of Texas; the state legislature; the State Assembly; We work for the state.).
- Use periods in “a.m.” and “p.m.”
- Always use the words “noon” or “midnight” instead of expressing the time as numerals.
- Faculty is a collective noun that uses a singular verb.
- Use “among,” not “amongst.”
- Use “backward,” not “backwards;” “toward,” not “towards;” “forward,” not “forwards.
- “More than” is preferred to “over” to express a quantity.
- A meeting or an event will take place “at” a building; “in” a room.
- Do not use a comma between the month and year. (In September 1995 he moved to Boston.).
- Use "alumna" to refer to one female graduate; Use "alumnae" to refer to a group of female graduates; Use "alumnus" to refer to one male graduate; Use "alumni" to refer to a group of graduates when the gender is not known; when the group consists of males and females; and when the group consists of only male graduates.
- Do not capitalize course titles unless they are language courses.
- Do not capitalize titles unless they are before a person’s name.
- Do not capitalize seasons, unless referring to a specific semester (e.g.) He will graduate at the end of the Fall 2005 semester; We are preparing for the fall semester.

The University Relations Office will be providing complete stationery and editorial style guides during the upcoming academic year. If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Ms. Tyra M. Metoyer at [tmmetoyer@pvamu.edu](mailto:tmmetoyer@pvamu.edu).