Proofreading for Grammatical Errors

Introduction

Proofreading is the process of reading over your work to find errors in the structure, grammar and punctuation of each sentence. Before proofreading for grammatical errors, you will need to check that you have answered the question with a well-structured, logical argument. See the Essay Structure and Using Evidence pamphlets for information about the organisation of paragraphs in your essay.

To develop your proofreading skills, it is important to keep an ongoing record in a small notebook of the types of grammatical errors that you commonly make and strategies to avoid them. Read through your notebook before you begin proofreading. Also, you need to have a dictionary next to you and make use of the grammar and spelling check on your computer.

To proofread your work effectively, it is important to read it through several times.

First proofreading

Read each sentence aloud. Pretend you are reading your work to someone else.

Ask:
- Is the meaning of each sentence clear?
  It is much better to write simple, clear sentences than complex, confusing ones.
- Is each sentence complete?
  Every sentence needs a main verb to be complete. Check that each sentence has a subject and a verb.

Subsequent proofreading

Now read your work again, looking for common grammatical mistakes.

Ask:
- Have I used a, an and the when they were needed?
- Do all the sentences have subject - verb agreement?
- Have I used the passive voice when it is needed?
- Have I used suitable verb tenses?
- Do all the plural nouns have plural endings?
- Is the punctuation correct?

Finally, check that your citations throughout the text, your list of references, and your overall presentation of the assignment are correct before handing in your work.