

1. Why are proofreading and checking so important?

A mistake is always **teh** first thing people notice.

If you have spent hundreds or thousands of pounds on copywriting, design, print and web creation to create a high quality image, you do not want to ruin this with a simple spelling mistake, such as the one in the paragraph above.

Yet people do notice them. Even the smallest error attracts people's attention away from the message you want to communicate to them. Very often, they will remember you for mistakes in your brochures, newsletters or web sites, rather than for anything else.

There are also many practical reasons. Are telephone numbers, web and email addresses correct so that customers can contact you? Are people's names correct? Are all facts accurate? What would be the consequences of adding an extra zero to a price showing that a product cost £50 instead of £5?

That is why all communications should be proofread and checked before publication.

2. How do I proofread and check my text?

While you should ensure that you have read your text yourself and are happy with it, always ensure that someone else – either a colleague or a professional proofreader – proofreads and checks it for you.

This is because when we know what we are reading we tend to see what we want to see, rather than what is actually on the page or screen. Someone reading your text for the first time will look at it with a fresh pair of eyes and will be more likely to spot anything that is wrong.

3. What do I need to proofread and check?

There are three elements to check:

- Content – your actual information, eg facts, figures, contact details
- Language – how your information is communicated, eg spelling, grammar, punctuation
- Format – design, typefaces and visual elements

4. How do I proofread and check my content?

You are likely to be most familiar with the content and should be able to check this yourself. If you are not certain of any facts, look up your original sources and cross-check your text with this.

While it is possible to proofread on screen, it is easier to print out your text and read it against the original.

As an alternative, you could ask a professional proofreader to check your content for you. Provide them with a copy of your original source data, if you want them to check that it has been entered into your document accurately.

Your content could include:

- Organisation details, eg formation date of the business, number of employees, turnover
- Product names, details and descriptions
- Other names, dates, times, prices
- Financial details or other figures in tabular format
- Quotes from employees, customers or others
- Contact details: phone numbers, web site addresses
- Page numbers, content pages and indexes

5. How do I proofread and check my language?

While you should read your text to spot any obvious mistakes, it can be easy to miss errors in your own writing, so get a colleague or professional proofreader to check it independently. This should cover:

- Language – ensure the text reads well and can be understood clearly. If it appears clumsy, few people will bother to read it.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation – as well as everyday words, check spellings of names, products and brands, and that these are used consistently.
- Multiple authors – where several people have written different sections of the same text, check that everything is consistent throughout the document.

6. How should my text be proofread?

At a basic level, you can use the spell-checker in your word processing software to check text written on your computer, but this only checks that words are spelled correctly, not that they are used in the right context.

A proofreader should look at several aspects of the text. As well as checking spelling, punctuation and grammar, they should also check that the text is easy to understand and is consistent.

7. How should the format of my document be checked?

Ensure that there is consistency throughout the document in the way that visual elements are used:

- Are logos and other visual devices in the correct colours and positions?
- Are the correct corporate typefaces used?
- Is there a logical and consistent system of headings?
- Are bold, italic and other forms of emphasis used consistently?
- Are all images and graphics correct?

8. How should a proofreader mark changes?

You can either provide the finished document to be checked on its own or, if you want content such as data to be checked, you will have to provide a copy of the original source data for cross-checking. The main methods of giving a proofreader access to your documents are:

- Hard copy – send printed pages to the proofreader. The proofreader can mark the paper with suggested amendments and return this to you.
- Word processing documents – email electronic files to the proofreader. The proofreader can amend the file and return it to you. In Microsoft Word, the ‘track changes’ option enables the proofreader to suggest changes for you to approve or reject.
- Adobe PDF documents – email electronic files to the proofreader. The full version of Adobe Acrobat enables the proofreader to attach “electronic notes” to the file with suggested changes, to be returned to you for action.
- Online – the proofreader can access your web site direct over the internet. If you have a content management system, it may be possible for the proofreader to make changes to your text online. Otherwise, changes can be sent to you in a word processing file or on hard copy.

9. How do I brief a proofreader?

Give the proofreader precise instructions on what and how to check, eg provide print-outs of data and explain that you want them to cross-check your document against this.

10. How should changes be made to the text?

You can either:

- Make the suggested changes yourself in a word processing document (or accept/reject changes if 'track changes' is used).
- Instruct your designer to make the changes, if the document has been professionally designed for print or created as a page for a web site.

11. Should I proofread and check again after making changes?

Yes.

It is very important that you double-check to ensure that all acceptable changes have been made correctly and that the text makes sense.

12. Is there anything else I should check?

If your text includes quotations from other people, check that you have received their permission for you to quote them. This is especially important if you are quoting a client.

If your text includes sensitive commercial information, such as details of new products, check with relevant colleagues that you are able to publish this.

Check that any quotations or images from other sources do not infringe someone else's copyright.

Do you need a professional proofreader?

For details of our z2z proofreading services,
please visit our proofreading micro site by clicking on

www.proofreadingresources.co.uk

or call

0845 200 7830