

## **Directed Learning Activity: Effective Proofreading Skills**

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**Intended course level:**

**Time expected to complete:**  
**All levels**

**20 - 25 minutes**

### **SLO/Objective/Purpose:**

In all levels of VC composition classes, students' final essays should show evidence of careful proofreading. Proofreading is the careful reading of a document to detect, and then correct, errors. It is the final step of the writing process. It should occur after the document is run through the computer spell check program, and goes far beyond what that program alone can accomplish.

**Materials needed:** Ideally, students will bring an essay of their own to proofread. However, students may practice proofreading skills with the sample passages attached to this DLA.

**Activity:** Students will learn to catch and correct errors in their writing by carefully reading the work out loud. Students will also learn why this technique is effective.

1. Tutors should begin by emphasizing the following points:
  - Running spell check is no replacement for proofreading.
  - Most of us get far more practice in speaking than in writing. Therefore, we will make far fewer errors in speech than in writing.
  - We can use that greater speaking skill to catch the errors we make in writing by reading our papers out loud.
  - Students should read slowly with a pen or pencil in hand. Even if a student does not have time to retype the paper, make the correction. Most teachers much prefer to see a handwritten correction on a paper than to see an error.
2. Tutor should model proofreading the first few sentences from the student's essay (or the exercise) while the student follows along. Ask the student what errors he/she noticed. Have student correct the error with pen or pencil.
3. Now, the student should begin proofreading the essay or the exercise. Tutors: you might hear the student correct an error verbally without realizing the written version is wrong. Stop them and ask them to listen to themselves carefully as they read the phrase again.
4. When students do successfully spot the difference between the correct spoken version and the written error, praise them and re-emphasize that when they hear a difference between what they are saying and what they are reading, they can usually trust the spoken version to be the right one.
5. If students cannot spot the error after a few tries, point out the problem and have them correct the written copy. Then continue until the end of the 20 minute session. Students may need to finish proofreading the whole paper on their own.

**REVIEW:** At the end of the session, tutor asks student to repeat what he/she has learned about the best way to proofread and why that method is best. (Answers are: The best way to proofread is by reading out loud. This is because we can use our better speaking skills to catch errors in our writing.)

### Proofreading Exercise:

Read this article out loud to find the errors, and then correct them with pen or pencil. There are 13 errors in all. Your tutor has the answer key.

### Ladybug, Ladybug

Stop! Don't squash that bug. Dont you no that not all bugs are harmful. Some bugs are actually helpful and the ladybug is than kind. Ladybugs eat the aphids that destroy gardens. Farmers and gardeners paid up to \$20 a quart for those little bugs.

From the time of the Middle Ages, the ladybug has being admired. Northern Europeans thought that if a ladybug crept across a young girls hand. Her chances of matrimony would improve. A century ago an insect pest threatened the entire fruit crop of California ladybugs were brought in and saved the crop. Ladybugs have even been immortalized in the childrens poem "Ladybug, Ladybug, Fly Away Home," and now New York has made that little orange an black bug it's official insect.

So, dont squash that little ladybug. Carry it into your garden.

Source: *U.S. News and World Report*, Aug. 7, 1989

(Adapted by K. Peinado from *The Least You Should Know About English* by Teresa Ferster Glazier, Form C, Fifth Edition.)