

# Aims & Objectives – Tips and Tricks



## ***Top Tips for Proof Readers***

**By Alison Reeves**

We all know it's difficult to proofread our own work – we tend to read what we think is there, rather than what is actually there. If you can't get someone else to do it for you, here are my top tips for proofreading:

- Avoid distractions. Proofread in a quiet environment, with no disturbances such as phones, conversation, background chatter etc.
- Print the piece out, and try to read the piece out loud. This helps you to spot faulty sentence construction and bad grammar.
- Take frequent breaks. Only you know how long you can read before you start to lose concentration, so set yourself a fixed period of time, after which you take a break.
- Remember you are not just proofing the words and punctuation. You also need to spot inconsistencies in style and formatting, such as headings that suddenly switch font size, or a change in bullet-point size or style.
- Concentrate on reading one word at a time. Normally, we only skim over the words, and fix our eyes on the words maybe four times in one line. Most people can only accurately take in about six letters in one stare, so we are relying on our peripheral vision to read maybe half the line. So, make a conscious effort to stare at each word in turn. This isn't as slow as it sounds; it's just a different reading technique.
- If you are proofing your own work, leave time between finishing the writing and proofing it. You'll spot more mistakes if you read it with a fresh eye; as if it was a document you had never seen before.

## **Ten Common Mistakes**

1. **Leaving letters out, especially in the middle of words.** Many words contain silent letters, or letters that are not sounded clearly when you speak quickly.

👉 Slimming

👈 Sliming

👉 Febuary

👈 February

2. **Using a small *i* as a pronoun.** A pronoun is a word that stands in place of a name such as Sue or Jack. Remember that whenever I is a word on its own, you should use a capital letter. For example, Sue and I went out for a meal last night.

3. **Mistakes when adding an ending, or suffix.** It's easy to make mistakes when adding the -ing suffix. Remember the rules for adding the -ing suffix to root words that end in 'e' or a short vowel followed by a consonant.

**E.g.** Take + -ing = **taking** (drop the final 'e')

put + ing = **putting** (double the final consonant)

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- 4. Incorrect use of homophones.** These are words which sound the same (or similar) but have different spellings and meanings. Remember your spell checker will not pick these up.

☞ The women left **their** handbags on the floor

☞ The women left **there** handbags on the floor

☞ You can't have **too** many helpers

☞ You can't have **two** many helpers

- 5. Missing words out altogether.** We tend to think faster than we can write, so it's common to leave out small words such as *a*, *the*, *and*, *it*, and *in*.

- 6. Getting letters the wrong way round, especially i and e.** Remember the spelling rule 'i before e except after c'.

☞ Review

☞ Reveiw

☞ Receipt

☞ Reciept

- 7. Using "should of".** This is another common mistake, in sentences such as:

☞ I should **have** packed the file in my briefcase

☞ I should **of** packed the file in my briefcase

- 8. Using one word when you should use two.**

**E.g.** *Alot* should be written as *a lot*  
*alright* should be written as *all right*

- 9. Leaving out apostrophes.** Apostrophes are used to show belonging or where letters have been left out. They are important because they make your meaning clearer.

*Won't* = *will not*

*Shan't* = *shall not* (shows missing letters)

The company's money is missing = money belonging to one company

The companys' money is missing = money belonging to several companies

- 10. Mistakes with subject-verb agreement.** This means using a singular verb with a plural subject, or vice versa. Note that companies are always singular:

☞ We **was** going to call

☞ We **were** going to call

☞ Aims and Objectives **is** a leading supplier of writing training

☞ Aims and Objectives **are** a leading supplier of writing training

Finally make sure you leave enough time to proofread your writing carefully, especially if you are in a hurry!