



Use Varied Media

Students generally have a sense of whether they learn best by repeating ideas, hearing them, seeing them, or some combination thereof. They can leverage this self-awareness by choosing the best modes for their own unique proofreading needs.

Auditory Learners

Auditory learners, instead of simply looking at the text, can read the essay aloud, which forces students to speak every word, highlighting the sound of the language. If they are very fluid readers, encourage them to read aloud slowly.

Reading aloud to a listener also works and can feel more conversational, but it can be stressful if students worry that they're being judged. Having students read aloud – either to themselves or to someone else – should be tried at least once because students will be surprised by the number of errors they catch when they are not relying solely on their visual sense. To combine this technique with a visual approach, they can point to each word as they say it.

A Second Auditory Technique

A different kind of aural sense can be triggered by hearing rather than saying words. Students can pair up and read one another's essays aloud. Each student should be looking at a copy of the essay, and the reader should simply read, slowly and clearly, while the writer follows along, making changes based on what she hears or sees. If the reader stumbles over a sentence or has to stop and start again, this is a sign to the writer that the sentence may lack clarity and should be marked for rephrasing.

For students uncomfortable with another reader but who can benefit from hearing the essay, a computer can read aloud. The computer's inability to inflect or unintentionally make corrections (like adding in a missing "of" or "and") allows the student to hear a completely dispassionate version of his own work. It can be disconcerting to hear one's work read in a robotic monotone, but it helps students locate errors without feeling judged.



For Visual Or Kinetic Learners

Reading from a printed hard copy rather than from the screen increases the ability to catch errors. Standing and pacing while reading, highlighting each word as it's read, or underlining while reading can also all help to draw students' attention to the work and help them to notice errors.

We All Make Proofreading Errors

In helping students make proofreading choices, the most important thing to remember is that proofreading, like every aspect of writing, is individual. You may feel frustrated that students don't catch all of their errors, but remember how many times you have sent emails with mistakes in them or returned to your own proofread writing and noticed typos you hadn't caught.

Proofreading one's own work is always exponentially harder than proofreading someone else's, and each of these techniques may help student move outside themselves and find more -- if not all -- errors.