Writing Center Thesis Writers’ Workshop Series Dr. Jane Fife

Proofreading Techniques

Methods of Diagnosis: Know *What* to Look For

* 20 Most Common Errors Website

<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/everyday_writer3e/20errors/default.asp>

This site lists the most common errors in college student writing and explains how to fix them.

* Exercise Central: Website with Diagnostic Quiz and Practice Exercises

<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/exercisecentral/Home.aspx>

Sign in to take the free quiz under “personal study plan” and do exercises related to your most common errors.

* Penguin ESL Common Errors Workbook <http://wps.ablongman.com/long_faigley_penguinhb_1/7/1979/506655.cw/index.html>

This site explains common errors and offers online exercises.

* Get suggestions from your teacher/thesis director to help you know what to look for.
* Get explanations from the Writing Center to understand how to fix your errors.
* Make your own proofreading checklist to look for your patterns of errors and mistakes.

Techniques of Focus: Know *How* to Look Carefully

* Rid your environment of distractions: no electronic interruptions or multi-tasking!
* Work in short blocks of time (30 minutes to an hour at a stretch) to avoid mental burnout.
* Use your computer’s spelling and grammar checkers as an initial screening, but beware of their limitations. Many people find it helpful to then print a hard copy for more proofreading.
* Read through once for each type of error/mistake on your personal checklist. (All this proofreading process should come after earlier readings for content and clarity—see the workshop on “Revising for Clarity” in this series).
* Cover text with a sheet of paper and focus on one line at a time.
* To find missing or extra words, read aloud and touch each word with a pen as you say it.
* Read the text backwards, sentence by sentence.