**Proofreading for CUPS: Capitalization, Usage, Punctuation and Spelling**

Before you publish your final essay or report, you need to take the time to proofread it first. It’s common to miss mistakes in your own writing, because you may not be reading it as attentively as you might read someone else’s piece. That’s because after going through the writing process of generating ideas, drafting, revising and getting feedback, you will have read it several times, and you’re sick and tired of it! For this reason, it’s very useful to have a friend or classwork partner read it for you. Still, it’s ultimately your responsibility to make your writing as correct as possible, so your meaning and ideas shine through without errors to distract the reader.

**Step-by-step proofreading process:**

1. Read your paper out loud – if it’s awkward to say, it’ll be awkward for your reader to read. Mark parts that need to be edited and go back to them.
2. Read each paragraph separately - make sure the structure of your paragraph makes sense, you’ve used transitions, and your information relates to the topic sentence (which, in turn, supports your thesis).
3. Check the basic mechanics (CUPS):
   1. Did you **capitalize** correctly?
      * + All proper nouns (names)
        + First word of every sentence
        + Races, nationalities, languages, religions
        + For titles, the first letter of every word (except for articles, prepositions and conjunctions)
        + All abbreviations of organizations
        + Words like “mother” if being used to address a person instead of their name
        + Religious words such as *God, the Bible, the Koran*
   2. Are words **used** properly?
      * + Beware of homophones, words that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings, such as there/they’re/their.
        + These are tricky, because spell-check won’t pick up on them if they’re spelled correctly.
        + Other commonly misused words:

A/an, accept/except, affect/effect, already/all ready, altogether/all together, among/between, bring/take, can/may, compare with/compare to, continual/continuous, fewer/less, good/well, imply/infer, quote/quotation, than/then, who/which/that

* 1. Is **punctuation** used correctly?
     + - Does every sentence end with a **period, question mark** or **exclamation mark**?
       - Are commas used for clarity, but not over-used (see “Rules of the Comma” attachment)?
       - Does every quotation begin and end with quotation marks?
       - When using parentheses, if it is a complete sentence inside the parentheses, put punctuation inside. If parenthetical text is part of a sentence, punctuate at the end of the sentence.
       - Is every paragraph indented?
       - Are apostrophes used properly?

1. For contractions (to show that a letter has been omitted on purpose)
2. To show possession (with *s*)
   1. **Spelling** rules
      * + *I* before *e* except after *c*, or when sounded like *a* as in neighbor and weigh. 8 exceptions are in this sentence: *Neither sheik dared leisurely seize either weird species of financiers.*
        + When a word ends in a consonant preceded by one vowel (bat), double the final consonant before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel (batting). Also true for two-syllable words ending in vowel, then consonant (control…controlling, prefer…preferred).
        + If a word ends with a silent *e*, drop the *e* before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel (state…stating…stated).
        + When *y* is the last letter in a word, preceded by a consonant, change the *y* to an *I* before adding any suffix except those ending with *I* (French fry…French fries, happy…happiness).
        + When forming a plural of a word that ends with a *y* preceded by a vowel, add *s* (toy…toys, monkey…monkeys).