THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

Editing Your Own Work

It is very important that before you hand in your assignments you edit them carefully. This means that you check your work on a number of levels—not just for spelling or grammatical errors. All writers need to put their writing through the editing process—even professional writers. You need to ensure that you leave ample time to complete this vital step.

Have you answered the question?

One of the main reasons students do poorly in their assessment is because they have not fully addressed the question. It is therefore important that you analyse the question carefully at the *beginning* of any assignment writing process. In order to double check you have done this at the editing stage consider the following points and use the checklist to tick either Yes or No.

	Yes	No
▪ Consider the: → directive words (what are you to do? e.g. 'discuss' or 'analyse') → content words (what are you to write about?) → limit words (what limitations are required?)	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐
One way to demonstrate that you have answered the question is to use key words from the question in your paper. ▪ Look at your introduction. Does it include key words from the question?	☐	☐
▪ Skim through the body of the text. Do these words occur throughout?	☐	☐
▪ Does your conclusion contain these words?	☐	☐
▪ Is each point you make relevant to the question?	☐	☐
▪ Is your supporting evidence relevant to the question?	☐	☐

Have you followed the guidelines?

	Yes	No
▪ Does your paper meet all the requirements set out in your course guide?	☐	☐
▪ Does your paper meet all the requirements set out in your subject guide?	☐	☐
▪ Is it an appropriate length? → approximately 10% more or less than the required length may still be acceptable (check your course guide for details)	☐	☐

Is the overall structure satisfactory?

	Yes	No
▪ Skim read to determine that you have a clear and logical structure. Does it include: → introduction with background information and an outline of the body? → clearly identified sections that correspond to a logical plan? → a conclusion in which you sum up?	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐
▪ Do your ideas flow logically?	☐	☐
▪ Are your ideas linked logically through using appropriate connecting words and phrases such as *Therefore..., Consequently, Similar findings..., Finally...?*	☐	☐
▪ Do the connecting words and phrases accurately reflect the logical flow of your ideas?	☐	☐

Is it well structured at the paragraph level?

	Yes	No
▪ Have you developed only one idea per paragraph?	☐	☐
▪ Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence that states the point you want to make in that paragraph?	☐	☐
▪ Do the other sentences in the paragraph relate to that topic, adding evidence, expansion, explanations or examples from the literature?	☐	☐

How are your individual sentences structured?

	Yes	No
▪ Does each sentence:		
→ make sense by itself	☐	☐
→ express one clear idea	☐	☐
→ contain a subject, a verb, and probably an object?	☐	☐
▪ Is it neither too long nor too short?	☐	☐
▪ Is each sentence grammatically correct? Check your tenses	☐	☐
▪ Have you used appropriate punctuation?	☐	☐

Have you referenced correctly to avoid plagiarism?

	Yes	No
▪ Have you correctly included in-text referencing whenever you have:		
→ quoted	☐	☐
→ paraphrased	☐	☐
→ summarised	☐	☐
▪ Does each in-text reference have a corresponding item in the reference list?	☐	☐
▪ Is your reference list formulated according to the required referencing convention?	☐	☐

What about your language use?

	Yes	No
▪ Is your language appropriately formal (with no slang or contractions)?	☐	☐
▪ Is the spelling correct (especially of jargon words and authors' names)?	☐	☐
▪ Have you used inclusive language (avoided use of racist or sexist language and use of gender specific terms e.g. instead of using 'mankind' use 'humankind', which is inclusive of both sexes)?	☐	☐

The final check

Once you have done all of the above you are ready for the final polishing touches.

	Yes	No
Read your assignment aloud and check for the following:		
▪ Do your ideas flow logically from one to the other?	☐	☐
▪ Are the sentences neither too long nor too short?	☐	☐
▪ Can you find any typing errors or missed or mis-used words?	☐	☐
▪ Have you overused particular words or sentence structures?	☐	☐
▪ Does any of the language sound clumsy?	☐	☐
Also check:		
▪ Do you need a cover sheet?	☐	☐
▪ Have you clearly identified:		
→ yourself	☐	☐
→ your lecturer/tutor	☐	☐
→ the course/assignment topic	☐	☐
→ page numbers	☐	☐
→ the submission date?	☐	☐

Some final advice

- Allow plenty of time for your editing/proofreading process. It may take longer than you expect;
- Do not try to edit for everything at once. Focus on one aspect at a time i.e. structure, grammar, punctuation, referencing, and finally formatting;
- Edit on hard copy as it is much easier to see errors on a print-out than on a computer screen; and
- Put your work aside for a day so that you have the chance to review your assignment objectively.

Further resources

For more detailed information on grammar, sentence construction and punctuation, refer to: Fox, M & Wilkinson, L 1993, *English Essentials*, Macmillan Education Australia, Melbourne.