

10 TIPS FOR EDITING PROFESSIONAL DOCUMENTS



1. **Understand the basic rules of grammar and punctuation.** That vs. which, who vs. whom, and when to use commas, semi-colons, or colons are all basic rules that every writer should know. If you aren't sure, check using [GrammarBook](#).
2. **Respect intellectual property.** Ensure you correctly cite all your sources, both when using direct quotes and when paraphrasing or summarizing. Remember that, as an author, you must even cite yourself once your article has been published...just because you wrote it doesn't mean it remains "yours."
3. **Check your facts.** Even when you believe you know something to be true, check your facts (and, in formal writing, cite a source). Google is an author's best friend but be mindful that not every "Google hit" will be a valid fact or statistic.
4. **Keep it current.** There are times when older references are appropriate but, for the most, keep your facts/statistics and references current. Stick to references 10 years old or less while also being mindful of stats that quickly change (i.e., don't site an employment rate from 2005 in order to make your point – a lot has happened since then).
5. **Proofread, proofread, proofread.** Be sure that your writing aligns to the style guide and/or writing standards you've agreed to; watch for inconsistent punctuation (e.g., are you using periods at the end of bullets or not?), and use "find and "replace" to catch some of your most common mistakes (e.g., do you switch between "waitlist" and "wait list"?)
6. **Adopt a "2nd set of eyes" rule.** Before you "hit send" on your article, abstract, presentation, or resume ensure someone else has carefully reviewed your document(s). Pass on your writing standards for reference and, if at all possible, send to someone you are confident has a strong eye for detail.
7. **Ask for the specific help you need.** If asking someone to review your written work, it's important for the reviewer to know whether you're looking for big picture feedback about content or detailed proofreading for spelling and punctuation. Be kind to your reviewers; proofread first to catch obvious errors.
8. **Develop a thick skin.** Feedback can be painful...but it will contribute to developing professional writing skills. Welcome feedback, keep track of your most common errors, and learn from your mistakes.
9. **Ensure compatibility.** If multiple authors are working on the same document, differences in hardware (e.g., PC vs. MAC) or software (e.g., Word 2003 vs. Word 2007) can impact document style and format (e.g., bullets, tables, fonts, graphics). During the final stages of editing, it's absolutely essential that the computers involved are fully compatible.
10. **Be accountable.** At each stage of your writing process, before hitting send, take the time to carefully review what you've written, comparing to the original purpose and also to the writing standards. It's unreasonable (and a waste of time) to send something forward hoping that the next person will take the time needed to proofread work that truly isn't ready for final review.

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604.856.2386
info@lifestrategies.ca
www.lifestrategies.ca