

Proofreading and Common Errors

Proofreading is a valuable skill. In your exam you will need this skill to:

- complete B1 (the proofreading question) on Unit 2
- check your writing on Unit 2 (B2) and Unit 3 (B1 & B2).

👉 Before Starting

1. Be aware of what is being assessed in the Writing element of your exam.
2. You are being assessed on the way you communicate and organise your work as well as your ability to write accurately. Make sure you address both.
3. Use past assignments and revision to work out the most common errors you make. Learn how to correct these and make sure you look for them in every piece of written work.
4. Get used to checking your work. Whilst learning this skill, you can read your work aloud to make the errors easier to detect.

Common Errors – Homophones

Lots of words sound the same but are spelled differently – some examples are below. Learn the difference between these (and make lists of any others that catch you out regularly):

to/too/two **there/their/they're** **hear/here** **wear/where** **we're/were** **sight/site** **pair/pear** **through/threw** **you're/your** **which/witch** **peace/piece** **new/knew** **our/are**

👤 Proofreading in an exam:

The Proofreading Task

- Read the text carefully a few times to see if you can spot 5 errors.
- Remember that the errors might be with spelling, punctuation, or grammar.
- Take care with corrections – if you make additional errors then you will not get a mark. Write up the correction exactly as it should appear in the text.

The Writing Tasks

Check as you write

- Don't leave all checks until the end. Reread each paragraph before you start the next one to make sure that your work follows logically.
- Make sure that your work is grammatically sound – are you using tenses consistently?
- Keep an eye on any words that you use which are in the question – there is no excuse for spelling these incorrectly.

Leave time for a final read through

- Look at the basics carefully – for example, have you started each sentence with a capital letter and ended it appropriately?
- Keep an eye out for words that you know you find problematic. Double check these.

Things to remember: Be consistent

In all writing it is important to convince your reader. **Don't undermine** your writing by **contradicting** what you have previously written.

For example, in a story you might write about waking up to see snow but later on describe someone who is sitting outside wearing shorts and a t-shirt. In a letter you might begin by describing a situation as outrageous but then go on to say that you don't mind either way. Both seem like silly examples, but students often trip themselves up by **contradicting** themselves. **Careful planning** can help you avoid this.

Punctuation: Don't forget the basics

For your work to make sense you must write in SENTENCES. Make sure you know when to use a FULL STOP and when to use a COMMA. Too many students throw away marks and undermine the accuracy of their work by comma splicing. (*Comma splicing means using a comma when the sentence should have ended with a full stop.*)

Grammar: Tenses

Grammatical accuracy is very important, and students who lose control of tenses will lose marks.

If you start writing in a particular tense, try to make sure you stick with it unless you have a reason for changing.

If you begin writing in the past tense, for example, "*That day was the worst day of my life...*" make sure that you continue in that tense.

Checklist for proof-reading your own writing:

- ✓ Is your writing consistent (see above)?
- ✓ Have you used basic punctuation (like full stops) at the end of each sentence?
- ✓ Have you used tenses consistently?
- ✓ Have you used capital letters for all names and proper nouns?
- ✓ Have you punctuated speech and questions accurately?
- ✓ Have you written in paragraphs?