

# The proofreading process

1. Read the copy for the first time at a normal pace to get a feel for what it's saying and how it flows.
2. The second read should be slower. When most people read, they focus on the copy's intent rather than the specific words and punctuation – but during the second read, a proofreader has to focus on every word and every punctuation mark (from apostrophes to commas).

Underline names, numbers, facts, URLs, unique spellings, euphemisms and clichés as you go for checking later.

**Check, check, check.** Don't take anything for granted.

Simplify the copy through formatting. If sentences have multiple points within them, break them up into separate sentences. If paragraphs have multiple points, break them up into multiple paragraphs. If you have lists in comma form, turn them into bullet points.

Doing this makes the copy easier to read both for your audience and for yourself – making the proofreading task easier.

3. The third read is all about looking at the sentences themselves. Do they make sense? Do they flow from one to another?

Some people wonder how many reads they need to do while proofreading – but there is no specific answer, other than as many as it takes. Three is the minimum, but I recommend at least four.

4. **Sleep.** If you can, wait a day before you do the final read – and the longer you leave it, the more mistakes you'll find. If you can't give it more time, try to read it from a different perspective by pretending to be someone else (such as a possible customer/reader).