

# PROOFREADING TIPS

**PETER MIDGLEY**

TURNING YOUR SHEET INTO SILK

**WWW.MIDGLEY.CA**  
**PETER@MIDGLEY.CA**

## **My Commitment to You**

Whatever your sheet of preference – papyrus, paper, or tablet, I can help make your work the best it can be.

- I will edit and proofread ethically.
- I will not take on work that contradicts my principles.
- I will provide honest assessments of your work.
- I will put my award-winning knowledge and experience as a writer and editor to work for you.

# Proofreading Tips 1

## Read the text backwards

- Reading text backwards helps to isolate the words and sentences from their context, and forces you to see the words for what they are, not what you think they should be.

## Let it sit

- Time and distance can heal. We know this is true of heartaches and grief, and it works for proofreading, too. Letting a piece of writing sit removes the immediacy, which means that when you return to it, you can do so with fresh eyes and a mind that is no longer actively immersed in the material.

## Do it in stages

- Check for spaces. Then for quotation marks. Then for spelling. And so on. Isolating elements and tasks will allow you to be more effective.

## Know your own errors

- Start compiling a list of your common errors. I tend to transpose letters. I'm especially fond of writing "form" instead of "from". Having a list of your common typos means you don't have to worry about which ones you might miss.

## Proofreading Tips 2

### Read out loud

- Reading aloud slows you down and lets you hear the words one by one.

### Change the font

- We all have favourite fonts and our eyes grow accustomed to them. Changing from a sans serif font to a serif font, for instance, changes the shape of the letters, or raises the height of a letter slightly. You see the words differently, and this can highlight mistakes.

### Slow down

- Use a ruler or a bookmark to keep you reading line by line. Proofreading is detail work. If you've ever polished an instrument like a French horn, you will know that you can rush over the larger surfaces with broad strokes, but once you get to the folds and bends, you, need to slow down to ensure you reach every nook and cranny. Proofreading is polishing the small stuff. Slow down.

### Phone a Friend

- Even if you follow the above steps, you are the author and are intimately familiar with your work. Having a friend who is not as familiar with the material look at it is a good failsafe. Set up an exchange with friends: you proof their work, and they proof yours.

### The most obvious tip of all

- **Hire a professional Proofreader!**

## Conclusion

Finally, remember that age-old maxim: When all else fails, read the manu...

### **No! Hire a professional.**

(Yes, I've said this before. It bears repeating.)



Peter Midgley

[www.midgley.ca](http://www.midgley.ca)

[peter@midgley.ca](mailto:peter@midgley.ca)

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## **Additional Resources**

Want to know more about editing or want tips on the craft of writing? Please take a look at my ever-growing set of free booklets.

Peter Midgley

[www.midgley.ca](http://www.midgley.ca)

[peter@midgley.ca](mailto:peter@midgley.ca)

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