

Proofreading checklist

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Techniques

- Change font and size
- Print it out
- Read fast, slow then backwards
- Ask a friend
- Run Word's full grammar check
- Unanswered questions?
- Points not driven home
- Double-check lede
- Double-check kicker
- Double-check first sentences in each paragraph

Readability

- Check first things first
- Run reading ease test, aim for >50
- Delete hype words
- Rewrite clichés
- Delete unnecessary acronyms
- Delete adverbs
- Shorten quotes
- Add subheadings if needed
- Rewrite as bullets if appropriate
- Delete unnecessary copy
- Check for unnecessary capitalisation
- Check standfirst
- Spell out and, percent
- Spell out numbers 1-9

Consistency checks

- US English or British English
- Oxford comma or not
- Single or double quotes
- Capitalise internet or not
- Full stops in bullets or not
- Check client style guides
- Fit for target audience/persona
- Check for TK, unfinished sentences

Words to avoid

Solution, end-to-end, going forward, granularity, drill down, anything 2.0, stakeholders, touch base, incentivise, pre-plan, action (as a verb), low-hanging fruit, holistic, traction etc.

Headline tips

- Alliteration
- Rhyme
- Repetition
- Analogy
- Bold assertion
- Contrarian
- News hook
- Descriptive

Sharpen up

- Upgrade to stronger verbs
- Use instructions
- Ask questions
- Use 'you', 'we' etc.
- Edit weasel words (should, might etc.)
- Replace long words with short ones
- Use direct everyday English
- Be conversational
- Use the reader's words, not yours
- Is there a good metaphor or simile?

Grammar

- Rewrite passive sentences
- It's, its
- You're, your
- There, they're, their
- Companies are singular
- Check apostrophes
- Affect vs. effect
- Lose vs. loose
- Complement vs compliment
- Principle vs. principal