

Proofreading

Top tips



Tip 1



Never rely on a spellchecker alone

Spellcheckers have their place, but they won't catch every mistake. Here's an example:

✘ We have an **envious** track record.

✔ We have an **envious** track record.

Don't rely on your spellchecker.



Tip 2



Be clear

Keep your target audience in mind. You're writing for them, not for yourself. Get these basics right:

- **Clarity:** make clear statements
- **Simplicity:** eliminate jargon where possible
- **Tone:** use appropriate language



Tip 3



Change your view

- **Style:** choose a different typeface that's easy on the eye
- **Size:** increase the size of the typeface
- **Spacing:** increase the space between the lines of text
- **Colour:** change the background colour



Tip 4

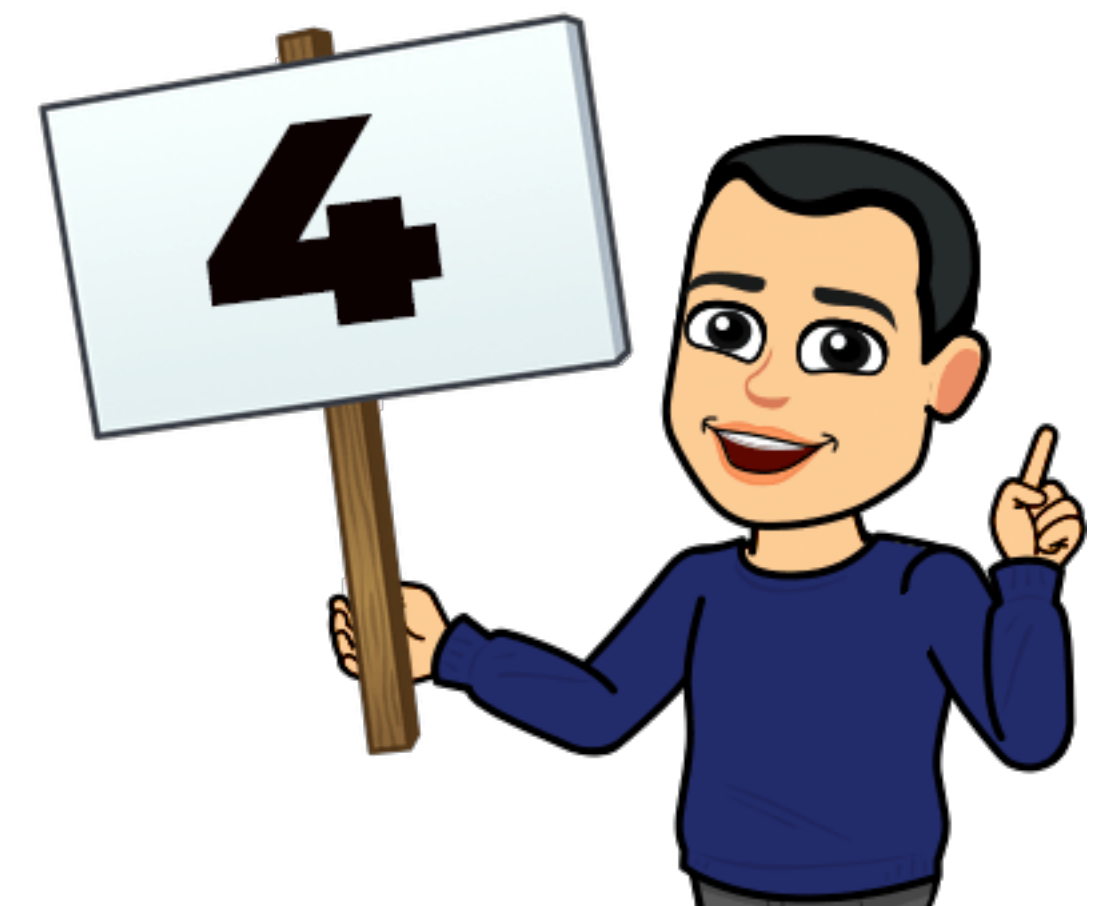


Read your content backwards

Altering your reading pattern can help you spot oddities and mistakes in your text.

Backwards content your read

If it helps, imagine you're Yoda. Mistakes more spot will you.



Tip 5



Read out loud

Saying your words out loud helps reveal the statements most likely to cause confusion among readers.

If a sentence sounds clumsy when you say it to yourself, you need to change it.

Bonus: save your voice by setting up your computer to read the text aloud for you.



Tip 6



Proofread when you're most alert

A good night's sleep and a fresh start may reveal several errors you'd previously missed.

Try not to check everything in a single sitting unless you have no choice.

Identify your **golden hour** – when you're best able to concentrate. This will depend on your body clock. Proofread during that time.



Tip 7



Break up the task

Read your content multiple times, each time looking for different types of issue. Here's an example:

- Reading 1: focus only on **spelling**
- Reading 2: focus only on **grammar**
- Reading 3: focus only on **headings**



Tip 8



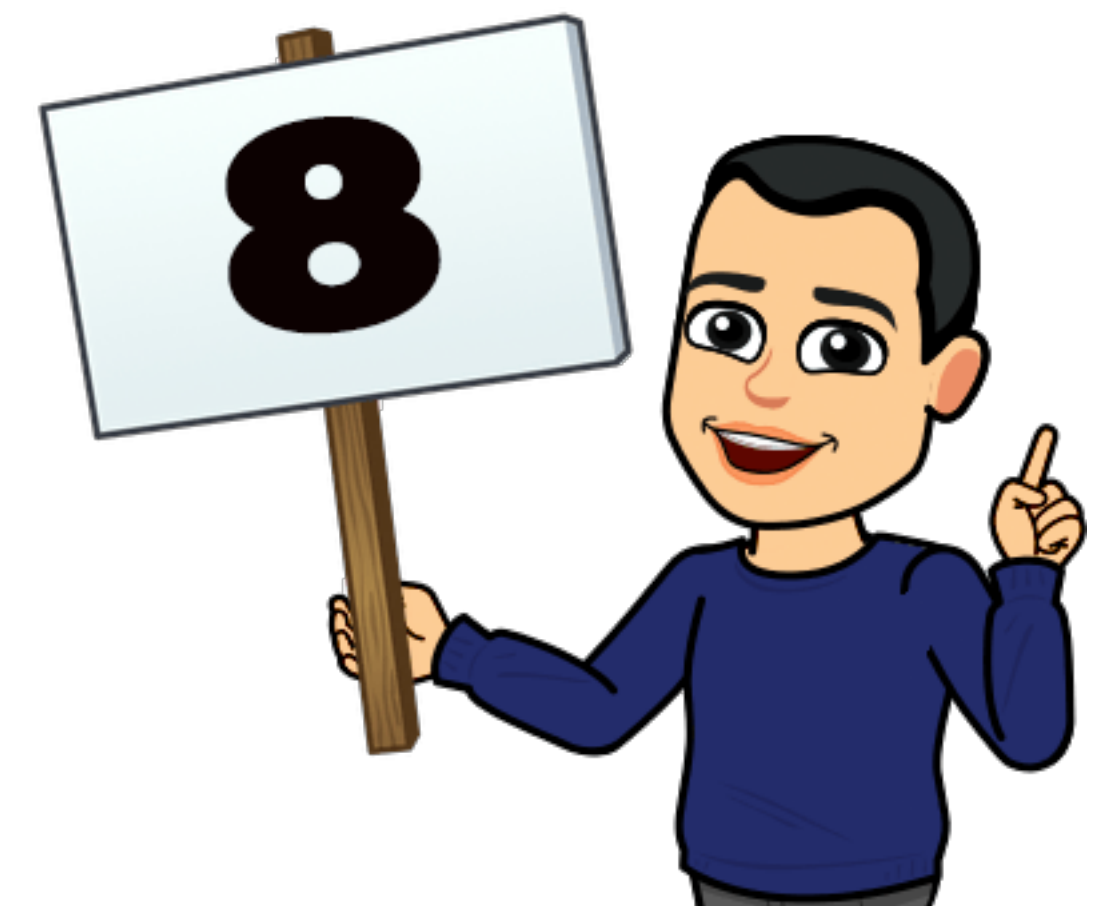
Phone a friend

Ask a colleague or a trusted friend to go through your document in as much detail as possible.

Request specific feedback:

✗ Bad: What do you think?

✓ Better: Does the section 2 summary make sense?



Tip 9



Don't chase perfection

Don't expect to spot every single error in your work. Don't get hung up about it either.

If you can catch **80% of errors** on each read-through, you'll realise that it's not worth checking the content more than 3 times.

Re-reading your work dozens of times is a waste of your precious time.



Tip 10



Call in the professionals

Most of your content might not need the skills of a professional editor or proofreader.

But if you have **mission-critical text** that has to be the best it can be, you'll need the help of an editorial professional.

Members of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders can help you get your words right.



Need help?

espirian.co.uk

Espirian.
Technical Copywriting