

Editing and Proofreading Assignments

How to check your assignment using three steps

Your assignment is an important piece of work. Your lecturer expects to read it without difficulty. Respect your work and the readers by making your work easy to read. Here's how to do it.

1. Make sure your assignment responds to the set task

Have you read the assignment task and analysed it carefully? Have you read the marking criteria? Does your assignment respond accurately to the task and does it meet the marking criteria?

2. Check text organisation

Texts are usually organised in predictable ways. Check that the structure of your text is easy to recognise and follow. Remember, you want the reader to focus on your ideas, not be confused by the structure. We can think of text as organised at three levels. Check or edit your writing at each level.

2.1 Assignment level (structural edit)

What is the genre of the assignment task? All text types (genres) have their own particular structure. Think: what's the difference between

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a report • a case study • an annotated bibliography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a critical reflection • an essay sub-genre, e.g. history • a catalogue for an exhibition
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Genre determines not only the content of the writing, but also its structure, presentation and order of ideas, and the format and layout (e.g. bullet points and graphics).

Check your overall assignment. Does it:

- match the key genre features?
- have an introduction, body and conclusion? Does the introduction give an outline of the key ideas in the assignment? Is it relevant to the assignment task? Does the body set out your ideas in clearly ordered paragraphs (see below?) Does your conclusion summarise key points in the introduction and the body, and give an overall sense of the value of the ideas in the world beyond?

2.2 Paragraph level (copy edit)

Check that your paragraphs mean what *you* intend them to mean. Check for:

- a topic sentence, followed by an explanation and/or evidence and/or examples
- references of sources that support your ideas (in the body)
- linking words that **build a relationship** between sentences and ideas e.g. (*As a result; because; Three main features of...; however; One...Another...*)
- hierarchy of terms e.g. Victoria University...this educational institution... the university... it/its...
- logical link to assignment question and introduction.

2.3 Sentence level (proofreading)

Check that your sentences:

- have a subject, an action word, and an object.
- are not too long – short sentences in plain English carry meaning more clearly.
- make links with other sentences (see above).
- use accurate punctuation.
- use correct spelling (use the spellcheck function in Word or a dictionary if you are unsure)

3. Check the format

Your lecturer will give you instructions about format: font, font size, line spacing, and margins, cover page with assignment and student identification details.

Note: different disciplines and subject units require different formats. This is because they reflect academic conventions that are a part of their specific discourses.

Check your study documents for formatting information. Check VU Collaborate, your Unit Guide, and if in doubt, ask your lecturer or tutor.

Other resources

More new VU resources will be coming your way in 2015. In the meantime, you'll find interactive resources at: <http://www1.rmit.edu.au/studyandlearningcentre/learninglab> including:

- Getting started
- Assessment tasks
- Writing skills

Having trouble analysing the task or writing your ideas?

VU services are here for you:

- Make an appointment with an Academic Support and Development lecturer.
- Visit the Student Writing Mentor Space in the Learning Commons on your campus.
- Information about these services is at: www.vu.edu.au/learningsupport