Proofreading Strategies

One of the most effective approaches for proofreading is **making sure you walk away from the text** for a while. One of the hardest things a writer has to do is read what they wrote and not what they meant to write. As such, a writer should allow themselves enough time and distance from a text so they can read what is really on the page. **"Revision" literally to means to "look again" or see with new eyes.** So build in time to walk away and break the text into manageable portions so you can walk away frequently and reset your eyes and attention.

Another important proofing strategy is to **make certain you focus on the words themselves and not their content.** Once a writer starts reading for meaning, they stop looking at the words themselves and allow their mind to fill in gaps with the words they know should be there. To combat that issue, writers should try the following:

- As you read, **touch every word** with your pen to make sure you actually read it.
- **Print** out the text.
- Change different paragraphs to **different fonts, sizes, and colors** so you are constantly bringing your attention back to the text itself.
- **Notice when you start thinking about the content** rather than the text and go back to the beginning of the sentence.
- **Read the text out loud**, or, better yet, have someone else or computer program read it to you.
- If you really want to nail your proofing, **start with the last sentence** in the text and proof that. Then go the previous sentences and so forth until you work your way back to the beginning. If you read the sentences in reverse order, you will not likely be able to follow or content, and so you will probably have an easier time reading the text itself.
- Do not forget to **proof your punctuation** as well as your spelling and sentence structure.
- **Proof the text more than once**. Statistical analysis on proofreading has proven that a writer is much less likely to catch a second error in a sentence because that writer takes a short mental break after identifying and correcting the first error and, thus, allows their eyes to gloss over the second.