

## The proof(ing) is in the pudding (Or, the sweet victory of error-free work)

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for smart marketing

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*"I was working on the proof of one of my poems all the morning, and took out a comma. In the afternoon I put it back again."*

- Oscar Wilde

While we don't generally spend an entire day contemplating a single comma, the importance of proofreading cannot be understated. Here are a few of our tried-and-true tips for successful proofing.

- Cultivate a sense of doubt. Ask yourself, "What can go wrong?"
- Find a quiet (or as-quiet-as-possible) place to proof and gather your tools: dictionary, style guide, highlighter, chewing gum, coffee – whatever you need to get into your proofing zone.
- Don't rely on spell-check (or grammar-check). Spell-check won't catch that you've used "there" instead of "their."
- Fresh eyes see much more; have someone else read your work. At the MP HQ, someone other than the project writer always proofs first.
- Print it out – it's easier to spot an error when you're hunched over a piece of paper than when you're squinting at your monitor.
- Read what's on the page – not what you think is there. Try reading backwards or out loud to make sure you haven't missed any words.
- Proof for different things separately. Read once for spelling mistakes, once for punctuation errors, then again for grammatical issues.
  - Look for extra spaces, broken copy, orphans, and widows.
  - Check subject/verb agreement.
  - Verify names, addresses, titles, phone numbers, and the like.
- Read for content – What is the purpose of the piece? Is it easy to comprehend? How does it flow? Is the tone appropriate for the project/client?
- Proof revisions against the previous version.

Then celebrate a proofing job well done! On those rare occasions when a writer here "catches" something that our pro proofer didn't, we certainly savor the moment, with a writer-ly version of a touchdown dance in the end zone.