Proofreading Tips: Editing for Surface Errors

Be sure to allot yourself enough time to proofread before submitting a final draft: 20-30 minutes for the "tips" listed below.

*Proofread a printed copy of your paper rather than attempt to edit thoroughly from the computer screen.

*Don't attempt to proofread for every type of grammatical or mechanical error at the same time. Take time to make a personal proofreading checklist of your most common errors. Use your checklist to identify problem areas in the paper you are currently working on.

* Read the paper aloud, very slowly, and distinctly pronounce exactly what you see.

* Place a ruler under each line as you read it.

* Read "against copy," comparing your final draft, one sentence at a time, to the edited draft you copied it from.

* Read the essay backward, end to beginning, one sentence at a time, so that you examine each sentence as a separate unit.