



THE BYLINE BEAT CURRICULUM

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WHY DO WE WRITE? AN INTRODUCTION TO WRITING AS A DISCIPLINE

Human beings have been writing for longer than we can remember. Throughout our history, writing has been used as a form of communication and entertainment, across generations. It has enabled people to document their life experiences and store important information about their culture for future generations. It has also provided people with a way to express themselves creatively and connect with other people. The first instances of writing can be traced back to prehistoric times. People would use stone carvings as a way of marking their territory or preserving a record of important events in their lives. Over the next several thousand years, as civilizations developed throughout the world, writing became increasingly sophisticated. In Ancient Greece and Rome, authors would use elaborate metaphors and literary devices to express their ideas and emotions. Later in the Middle Ages, the printing press was invented, allowing for the mass production of books and other written materials. In the early 20th century, electronic communications systems were developed that allowed people to communicate across great distances instantly and seamlessly. And today, the internet has transformed the way we communicate and share information by connecting people around the world in unprecedented ways.

Through this rich history, there is one thing we have learned – that the reasons why people write are too numerous to count. From personal expression to fostering change in society, writing has been and remains a powerful tool for it all, because of how it helps individuals explore their thoughts and feelings and communicate their ideas effectively. Through writing, writers can aim to learn more about themselves and the world they live in, while inspiring others to do the same. Many people start their writing journey as people who are looking for an outlet, but as they continue to write, they come to recognize how writing becomes inextricable from our engagement with the world. It fosters dialogue and encourages us to say what sits inside us, no matter how unexpected or divergent it may be. In fact, writing offers us a gift that most other forms of art cannot – that of reflection. It is possible to write something, dwell on it, and change it. Or to write something and upon thinking about it realize that your conviction in what you have written about has strengthened itself. In this way, writing is an incredible personal tool to navigate our own emotions as well!



Because of how writing can be a personal activity, it is often seen as a solitary activity, one that can only be enjoyed by those who are able to sit down and write without interruption. However, this view of writing is now largely outdated

Today, writers no longer simply sit alone at their desks and produce their works in isolation. Instead, they work with a wide range of people throughout the writing process. They collaborate, solicit feedback on their drafts, and build communities around shared interests and niches. They engage in conversations with other authors in order to share ideas. They also interact with their readers in order to understand their opinions on their work and get feedback from those that they may be writing for.

This is because today, writing is informed by more than just the writer's own mind and perceptions. It can be used as a commentary on society, to reinforce or criticize ideas and values, and to contribute to aspects of culture that communities find important. At the same time, it can also be used to inform and educate, to subvert commonly held notions and reflect on what we know to be true. Writing is communication, no matter what form it is written in. Historical writing preserves records and tells us what came before. Poetry undoes semantics to make the world feel more familiar, and bring us closer to our emotions. Even fiction and its practice of building imaginary worlds and communities is a way of saying something about the world. This is what makes it so important for writers to collaborate, to listen to their audiences, and to pay attention to the state of the world. Writing can and does change the world, every single day.



THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF WRITING

Writing is a verb that is used a lot—homogeneously, too. However, this does not reflect the reality of how writing actually works. Even though it is used as a singular verb, there are many different types of writing. They all require different skills and are used for varying purposes. We have all come across these different types of writing—both as writers and readers. It is important to understand their salient features so that they can be engaged with in more meaningful ways.

Non-fiction is a genre that is extremely popular with readers around the world. It refers to a category of writing that captures reality and how things are in the world. It encapsulates a realistic perspective of the world, and does not employ fantastical imagination—wherein one would imagine a different type of world that breaks the scientific and physical laws of ours. However, this does not mean that all non-fiction is true. It simply means that the events narrated in non-fiction writing are plausible and can occur in our world as it exists today. Non-fiction writing is used to capture the flaws, imperfections, and also the beauty of our world as it exists today. It can be used to weave tales of humanity, love, warmth, as well as to depict the shortcomings of our world as it is. Non-fiction writing is generally used to document moving stories that have happened to people, for writing autobiographical narratives, and biographies, as well.

Fiction writing, on the other hand, allows the reader to explore worlds that are outside ours. Fiction writing, for writers, can involve a skill called “world-building”. It is not mandatory to use world-building in fiction; however, world building helps the writer create a comprehensive setting and background for their tale. Fiction can also borrow facts from reality, and bend them to make them more unbelievable, or believable. The capabilities of fiction extend as far as the writer’s imagination. However, fiction does not always find itself in a world beyond ours. There are fictional stories written in the realms and laws of our own world, too, and they can be just as fascinating. Fictional narratives simply mean that a piece of writing has been created with the use of fictitious elements—that the writer pulled from their imagination. Fiction writing is often used to create stories that might not have been told otherwise, and to provide a means of escape from the real world to that of stories.

Another interesting type of writing is poetry. It is possibly the one that is most difficult to define. However, poetry has a simple aim—to mold language in a fashion that alters conventional forms of writing—and to create beauty from it. Poetry seeks to express in creative and innovative ways.

It can also be subjective, like art: wherein each member of the audience takes away a different kind of experience from it. For writers, poetry can be a means of self-expression, where they use the most creative style of writing to express themselves. Poems can be cryptic, or mean exactly what they want to say. They are like a secret code written by poets, and decoded by the readers. What it means is the difference between those two. However, poetry is certainly amongst the most unique forms of writing to exist.

At the other end of the spectrum from cryptic poetry is academic writing. It aims to be as straightforward as possible. The purpose of academic writing is to deliver information, which is generally specialized according to the field for which it is being done. Even within academic writing, distinctions can be made on the basis of the field. For instance, academic writing for the pure sciences like Physics, Chemistry, and Biology tends to put things forth without paying much attention to the external structure of the sentences. In the Humanities, academic writing is different, it can attempt to be poetic and moving, while also efficiently disseminating information about the topic. What makes academic writing stand out from other types of writing is the extreme amount of specialization that goes into it. Academic writing does not shy away from using niche vocabulary and terms that might not be of acquaintance to every reader.

This is where articles come in. Articles also disseminate information. However, they are generally more accessible than academic writing to the average person. Articles might also take the extra effort to explain any niche or technical terms being used. There is no similar pressure on academic writing—as it is written with the purpose of being read by experts. Thus, articles disseminate information to the general public. Writing articles requires a lot of skill too, one has to understand the subject matter well enough to break it down for a reader who might not know anything about the topic of discussion. Newspaper articles, every day, do the task of making new pieces of news, information, and data available to the masses.

Thus, there is no writing of one kind. Variation can be found even within specific forms of writing. There are, however, conventions to guide the writer, and help them make the best use of the style they choose to go with. Moreover, the personal style of writing of a particular writer can make a big difference to the type of writing they do. What other way to find out than writing yourself?



JUST IMAGINE: HOW TO WRITE FICTION AND STORIES

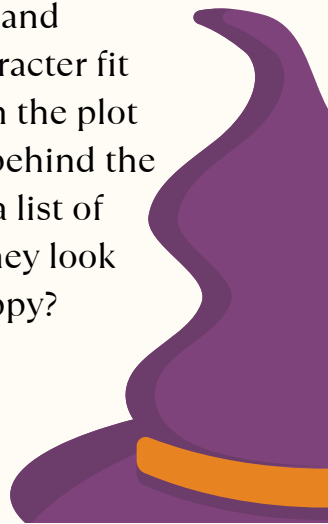
Putting words to paper and creating fictional worlds are profuse with personal emotions and associations that come to life through our unique imaginations. To write a story is to give birth to a new conception of reality – it is to reproduce the infinite possibilities of the world through characters, plots, and climaxes. It is a common misconception that fiction is removed from rational explorations made by non-fictional pieces of writing. But, the power of literature lies in jolting the reader to philosophical, personal, and social realizations by using characters as a looking glass into their own lives. Many authors have asked and explored the titular question: how does one write? In fact, the question itself comes loaded with historical energies and explorations of what it even means to produce fiction, what is its role in our social world, and how does its production transform our current realities?

As Franz Kafka, the 20th-century German author and philosopher once wrote in his diaries: “Each of us has his own way of emerging from the underworld, mine is by writing. That’s why the only way I can keep going, if at all, is by writing, not through rest and sleep. I am far more likely to achieve peace of mind through writing than the capacity to write through peace.” Showing that writing is an activity that intrinsically engages the self, Kafka talks about it as that which allows the author to step out of the recesses of his mind. It is a way of coping with the world and putting our imaginations to use for societal observations.

So, how do we become writers? How do we put the stories bustling in our minds to paper? Let’s explore certain crucial aspects of writing one by one.

How to come up with characters?

Characterization is one of the most crucial aspects of fiction writing. It is by embodying the personality of the protagonists that the author tells a story. The world of the novel is built around them, and their experiences. Therefore, it is essential to walk through the ways in which you can formulate strong, and engaging characters. The first step is to ask yourself: why does the character fit the story? Make a list of reasons why their personality would work with the plot you have in mind. Once you have a rough idea of the core inspiration behind the character, it is time to come up with essential personality traits. Make a list of characteristics they possess – both physical and emotional. What do they look like? How do they perceive the world? Are they alienated? Are they happy?



Framing your thoughts in the form of questions will help you connect the character to the plot. The first character you come up with can be anyone and it doesn't necessarily have to be a protagonist. In fact, non-human objects and environments can become characters themselves. For example, you could be writing about a wilderness or an island that holds mystical energies and cognitive powers. The trick is to let your imagination run free and structure it in relation to crucial points as you ideate.

How to come up with a plot?

A good piece of fiction has a plot without loopholes. Loopholes are disjunctions in a narrative. If you have set up a story that functions to reach a specific conclusion, you need to make sure that you tie all the loose threads together. Since a plot has many elements and events that drive it forward it is important to figure out its basic structure. Some plots are linear – meaning that they begin with an event that progresses over the course of the short story or the novel. For example, XYZ event occurs, and then more events follow until the story reaches its climax, and finally its conclusion. Linear plots are tied to progressions in time. It could end with a didactic ending, teaching the reader something moralistic about the world. Or it could have an open-ended conclusion – leaving the reader with questions to think about. Plots can also be cyclic. Such plots could consist of time jumps and not try to reach an end. As a writer, you need to have a clear timeline of the events in your story. Chart it on a piece of paper and connect each element and event you come up with to the characters as you go along.

What are important factors to keep in mind while storytelling?

A good story permeates the being of the reader and immerses them in the fictional world built by the author. It makes the reader care about what happens to the lives of the characters, inciting emotional responses as the novel or story unfolds. As a writer, you must ensure you check certain boxes while telling a story. As already mentioned, the first instruction is to make sure there are no loopholes in your plot and that it is completely airtight. How can you do so? Refer to the following points next time you are writing a story!

- Make sure you are aware of the audience you are writing for. If your story will speak to certain kinds of people and their experiences, ask yourself, what makes the characters relatable? Why is the plot crucial for the target audience? How will it sustain their interest as the story progresses?



- We began by talking about how a good story incites emotional investment. As you write, think about how you can make your readers empathize with the characters you formulate. Connect the events of the plot to the emotional responses of the characters and make sure you don't lose track of why a character's experience is central to the general theme of the plot.
- Master the art of creating conflict. Plots are driven by differences, not consensus. Events trigger emotions, which further trigger characters to make certain decisions that drive the plot forward. Lay out these catalysts clearly for yourself and your characters as you pen down your fictional pieces.

How to select a title?

Each story has a certain theme running through its body. When picking a title, you should think about the core question your piece is asking. Write down the most crucial themes of your story if there isn't one central idea your story is talking about. For example, if your story is centered around the life of one character and follows the many events they experience, you could base your title around them. Even when naming characters, you can think of how that connects to the rest of the plot. Or your story could be about a street or a period in history. Come up with catchy and relevant titles based on the philosophical themes in your story.

Genres of Writing

Writing comes in diverse forms and historical shifts have given birth to diverse genres of writing. Let's explore them!

- **Fable:** Stories with morals. They are written with the purpose of teaching the reader important life lessons. Often, such narratives are fantastical and occur in supernatural settings.
- **Folklore:** Oral histories, stories, poems, or songs that have traveled over the centuries to take their present forms. These stories begin as oral narratives until they are eventually penned down by contemporary generations.
- **Fantasy:** Set in an imaginary world, such stories undo any notion of the real world. They have fictional atmospheres, places, creatures, and beings.
- **Realism:** A form that aims to mimic our reality. Heavily influenced by so-called real events in society, such stories contain heavy descriptions of material atmospheres, characters, and emotions to match the events to reality as closely as possible.

EBB & FLOW: AN INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

A poem is a piece of literature that makes use of creative words to communicate concepts, feelings, or a narrative to the reader. When read aloud, many poems contain words or phrases that seem to match with each other, which is called rhyme. Moreover, poetry also features rhythm! Before we explore the concepts of rhyme and rhythm, let us look at the types of poems.

Types of poems:

- *Narrative Poems*

Narrative poems are one of the main forms of poetry. These poems usually tell a story and are descriptive. They provide a thorough description of a person, an item, or an event, among others. Narrative poems also often convey the narrator's emotions or sentiments. While most narrative poems are enjoyable, some are brief while others are lengthy.

- *Shape Poems*

Also known as Concrete Poems, Shape Poems involve the use of words that are ordered to match the subject of your writing. For instance, you may write a poem inside the shape of a raindrop if you are describing rain!

Here is one such example



A
TALL
LONELY
OAK TREE
WINDS HOWL
LEAVES SHAKE
ACORNS CLATTER
D
O
W
N
TO THE DRY GROUND

- *Acrostic Poems*

In these, each line of the poem begins with letters that, when read vertically, form a word. The word that is thus formed is connected to the poem's theme. However, these letters do not have to be at the beginning; they might be the final letter of each line or even a letter in the middle.

Here's an example:

Creamy and sweet
A big birthday treat
Kids love to tuck in
Eat it with a grin!



- *Nursery Rhymes*

A nursery rhyme is a little song or poetry meant for kids that contains rhymes, teaches a lesson, or tells a humorous tale. Most of the time, this is done to amuse or please a child. Some rhymes are also inspired by real-life events and aim to impart wisdom to young listeners.

Here is an example of a nursery rhyme you might all be familiar with!

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky!



1. Rhyming words

Rhyming words sound the same at the end. In other words, two words rhyme when their final sounds are the same. For example, the words duck and truck rhyme with each other. End rhymes are rhyming words that appear at the end of a line in a poem.

Here's an example:

My cat is nice.
My cat likes mice.

2. Rhyme Scheme

A poem's final rhyme pattern is referred to as its rhyme system. Starting with "A," then "B," and so forth, a letter is assigned to each new sound at the end of a line. If an end sound occurs twice in a line, it receives the same letter as that of the first line.

My cat is nice.
My cat likes mice.
My cat is fat.
I like my cat.

The rhyme scheme here would be? A, A, B, B

My cat is nice.
My cat is fat.
My cat likes mice.
I like my cat.

The rhyme scheme here would be? A, B, A, B

Now that you have understood what a poem is, what rhyme and rhythm mean, and how to identify a rhyme scheme, let us move on to the next chapter!



FACTUAL FLUX: ENGAGING IN JOURNALISM

What happens in the world around us as we go on about our day? What new policies were enacted by the government with the help of money from the taxpayer? What did the government do to ensure that the forest in our area remains conserved? Why is the water in your tap brown? What is the weather going to be like one week from now when you are going on your school trip? Most importantly, how do you know what's happening so you may be a more cognisant member of the society?

Every system in the world requires a sort of check and accountability. To keep in check the mischievous elements in the society, a police force is needed. Similarly, to keep in check the spending and workings of a government, a strong form of journalism is needed - which reports and keeps track of everything that happens and is done around the country and also the world.

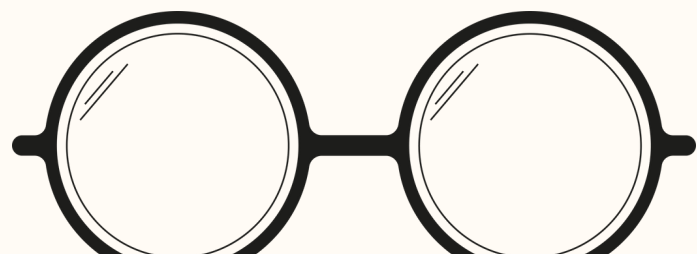
Now, in more technical terms, Journalism is the practice of gathering, preparing, and distributing news along with accompanying analysis and feature content. The phrase was first used to describe the printed, more specifically in newspapers, reporting of current events. But the definition of the term expanded in the 20th century with the development of radio, television, and the internet. Newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, motion pictures, blogs, websites, e-mail, Twitter, and social networking sites are just a few of the media that journalists can print or broadcast in.

Hard News

Journalism can refer to a wide range of news coverage. The term "hard news" is occasionally used to set apart stories from those of less importance from those considered to have definite news value to society. Hard news is typically defined as information regarding public policy and politics, conflicts, and significant natural disasters.

Soft News

The term "soft news" or "infotainment" has been used to describe coverage of celebrities, sports, weather predictions, consumer advice, "human interest" stories, and other topics connected to entertainment and lifestyle. In addition, the objective of hard news reporting is to give facts or describe occurrences in an unambiguous manner. On the other hand, editorial analysis and opinion pieces purposefully present a particular viewpoint.



Why Ethics are Important in Journalism

Just as important as it is to know what to report, it is also equally important to know what not to report - what simply doesn't call for a public viewing. There is a term in journalistic circles used to describe a flair for finding news - this flair is called having a 'nose' for journalism or being able to 'smell' news. In addition to being able to 'smell' news, it is also important to know how to report the event that you are reporting.

This is where the ethics of journalism come into play. Journalists continue to influence public opinion through presenting news, along with accompanying analysis and commentary, as well as by deciding what to cover and how to cover it. In general, journalists—particularly those who cover breaking news—are seen as providing a vital service to society.

Journalists now have an idealistic duty to inform the public of significant facts in a fair manner. People typically believe they have a right to have sufficient knowledge of current events to engage in public life. Thus, it is assumed that the journalist has a responsibility to inform. The earliest independent newspapers made a vital contribution to the growth of literacy as well as the ideas of human rights and democratic liberties in the 19th century.

The most important part of writing a journalistic story, especially in the modern times of social media and connectivity, it is important to remember that the journalist himself is not the story; but only the viewer of the story, writing things as society sees it. It is a job like any other which should add to the society.

In writing a journalistic piece, especially reportage, there are some basic rules that every journalist follows to be able to write a comprehensive, responsible and ethical story. These rules, or steps in the process are called the 5Ws of journalism.

The "Five W's" of journalism are:

- "Who,"
- "What,"
- "When,"
- "Where," and
- "Why."



Journalists can better answer the essential inquiries that any narrative should be able to address by referring back to the Five "W's". These are considered to be the cardinal rules of journalism.

Journalistic pieces differ from academic pieces in many ways. An academic piece generally explores every aspect of the problem but in a more literature-based, philosophical way. A journalistic piece on the other hand, must remember to stick to the relevance of the story to the general public and allow such language so as to be easily understood by the general public.

The most crucial qualification for a journalist is experience. Being in the field is the best way for a journalist to pick up skills and develop experience. Journalists used to learn their trade in this manner. Even today, a degree is not always prioritised by news organisations; experience and knowledge are. However, there are degrees specifically focused on journalism, and many journalists in the workforce today have a college education. By working at the school newspaper, radio, or television stations, or by interning at major news organisations, journalism students acquire the essential experience while pursuing a degree.



IMPORTANT PRACTICES IN WRITING

Thus far, we have looked at some very important aspects of writing – why we do it, what it can do for us, and how to engage with different styles of writing such as poetry, journalism, and short stories. In addition to the motivations with which they are written, what sets these different genres of written work apart? One of these things is known as genre conventions. Genre conventions are the writing traditions and practices that are native to a particular genre: for example you would be a lot more likely to find enjambment in poetry than in prose. Becoming familiar with the conventions of each type of writing can seem like a herculean task – however, there are some more general, overarching rules that you can follow to make your writing feel more polished, and put-together. Without any further ado, let's look at what some of these might be, how you can begin to cultivate these skills, and employ them in your work.

Structuring Your Sentences

While this may sound simple at first, the ability to distinguish a clause from a phrase, and knowing what makes up a complete sentence is the foundation of writing - no matter the genre.

To begin with, in English, every sentence must have a **subject**, and a **predicate**. The subject *names*, while the predicate *tells* us about the subject and is most often a verb (action word). Therefore, a sentence with one subject, and one predicate, is called a simple sentence. For example, "The boy jumped," would be a simple sentence wherein "the boy" is the subject, and "jumped" is the predicate. A related term for a simple sentence, and one you might run into more often, is a clause.

A **clause** is any group of words that has a subject, and predicate. If the clause can form a sentence by itself, it is known as a **principal clause**. However, good writing is often more than the putting together of short, declarative sentences. This brings us to the next level of sentence structure - **the compound sentence**. The compound sentence is one that contains two or more principal clauses. For example, "The girl rode her bicycle, the bicycle had a basket," would form a compound sentence wherein two principal clauses are separated by a comma.

On the flip side, a clause that does not form a sentence by itself is known as a **dependent clause**. These are usually tacked on to principal clauses to form a **complex sentence**.

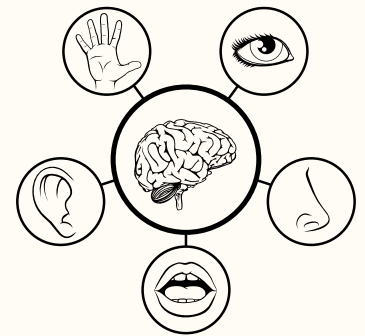
For example, take the complex sentence, “The girl rode her bicycle down to the quarry.” Here, the first clause, “the girl...bicycle,” is the principal clause, while “down...quarry,” is the dependent clause.

It is important to note that a complex sentence contains one principal clause, and one or more dependent clauses. A **compound sentence**, on the other hand, contains two principal clauses, and one or more dependent clauses. The best way to familiarize yourself with these, and add to the flow of your writing, is to put your knowledge to the test and start writing!

Imagining Imagery

One of the most powerful tools in a writer’s arsenal is imagery – it helps the author convey what they see in their mind’s eye to the reader. This is especially true for genres such as poetry, short stories, and other forms of fiction writing. There are five general types of imagery, based on the five senses:

1. Visual Imagery based on sight
2. Auditory Imagery based on hearing
3. Olfactory Imagery based on smell
4. Tactile Imagery based on touch and
5. Gustatory Imagery based on taste



Therefore, the type of imagery you would employ as a writer, would depend very much on factors such as the subject of description, the sense you want to give rise to, and the emotion you want to evoke in the reader. A good example of this could be the famous scene from Ratatouille where Ego, the food critic, takes a bite of Remy’s food and is transported to his childhood. This example is one that highlights the power of gustatory imagery - the others can be employed similarly.

See if you can identify the types of imagery employed in the sentences below!

- The boy’s room was putrid, its essence wafting through the house was enough to make one sick.
- The iron beam fell with a bang that left nearby pedestrians dazed and confused by what had just happened.
- The blade of grass was a nimble one, with a lone dew drop weighing its lithe body off to the side.

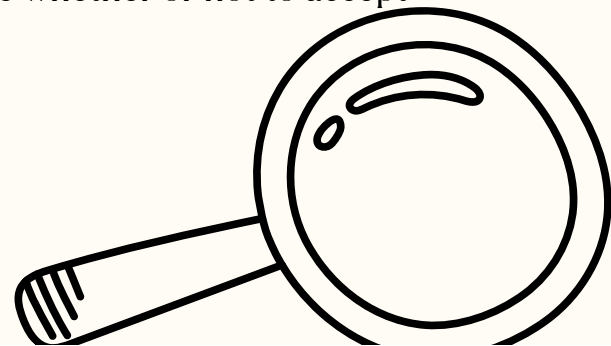
- The remodeled kitchen had no shortage of smooth, unobstructed surfaces. The metal finish was sleek, cool, and betrayed a keen edge.
- The smell of the cough syrup was bad, but a sip was enough to make one crinkle their nose, squint their eyes, and cough in protest.

Picking Up Proofreading

A large portion of the writing process actually takes place after the piece has been written! Once you have completed your work, it is time to move on to the vital ‘proofreading and editing’ stage. This is a terribly important stage as it allows the author to iron out any kinks in their writing and polish it up before it becomes available to the public. It serves many important basic functions such as identifying and correcting spelling and grammatical errors, re-structuring if required, or even diversifying your vocabulary. However, proofreading can also help serve higher-order functions such as getting a better sense of how your writing flows, where sentences can be restructured to be more impactful, and whether you have achieved what you wanted to with the piece.

Some tips and tricks to help with the proofreading process:

- Read the piece aloud to yourself. This may feel silly to do but we often catch both kinds of errors and adjustments listed above as we hear the writing being read out. Ensure that you make notes either by highlighting, or adding comments to ensure you know what needs revision after you are done. The author can repeat this process till they are content with the quality of their work.
- It is often the case that the author, on account of constant exposure to the specific piece, becomes a kind of blind to the areas of improvement it presents. In situations such as this, remember that writing does not have to be a process carried out in isolation – ask a friend if they have the time to proofread your work for you! You can also request that they leave comments, or edit your document using the ‘Suggesting Mode’ on Google Docs, or the ‘Track Changes’ tool on Microsoft Word. This is so that you do not lose any of your original work, and as the author, can decide whether or not to accept your friend’s suggestions.



- However, it is not enough only to proofread - editing is an important part of the post-writing process as well. Here is where the author can really make the piece their own, and how they envisioned it to be. This becomes a lot easier to do during edits as you already have a written piece to work with – it just needs to be spruced up however you'd like it to be.
- It becomes very important to note that it can be easy to fall into the trap of multiple rounds of proofreading and editing. Unfortunately, this often becomes a leading cause in the permanent shelving of various writing projects. Know that, as the author, you are likely to be more critical of your work than others might be and so, try your best not to fixate on quality at this stage. Use your own judgment to determine when the piece is ready to be read!

