The Writing Center’s Stance on Proofreading:
Our Policies and Procedures

The emphasis of the Writing Center is on helping you become a better writer, and this means that we help you learn to proofread your own work. We can’t proofread a paper for you. That would make us better editors, but it would not make you a better writer. However, we will help you learn how to be a better proofreader. We recommend that you come to us in the early stages of the writing process so that we can help you plan and revise your writing; there is not much we can do if you come to us with a first draft one hour before it is due. Keep in mind that the Writing Center is not a proofreading or error-correction service, so you can’t expect the tutor to correct all of your mistakes for you. You are responsible for the content, the language, and the correctness of your paper. You and the tutor must make decisions together about what changes are necessary.

When you ask a tutor to proofread your paper, this is what you can expect:

1. The tutor will read the paper quickly to get a sense of what it is about and what you are trying to say.

2. The tutor will begin to point out grammatical and stylistic problems and explain the rules and concepts behind them. Tutors are instructed not to mark on papers, so it is important for you to pay close attention and make corrections and notes yourself.

3. The tutor will help you make a list of your most common problems, a personal proofreading checklist, to help you with later papers.

4. If your paper is a research paper or other long assignment, there may not be enough time to proofread the whole paper. You and the tutor must decide which parts of the paper to work on.

5. After the tutoring session, you should proofread the rest of the paper yourself, looking for specific problems your tutor pointed out. A follow up appointment to check your corrections is probably a good idea.

The policy described above is designed to help you improve both the paper you are working on and your own proofreading skills. In a few short weeks, you should be able to catch many of your most problematic errors yourself.