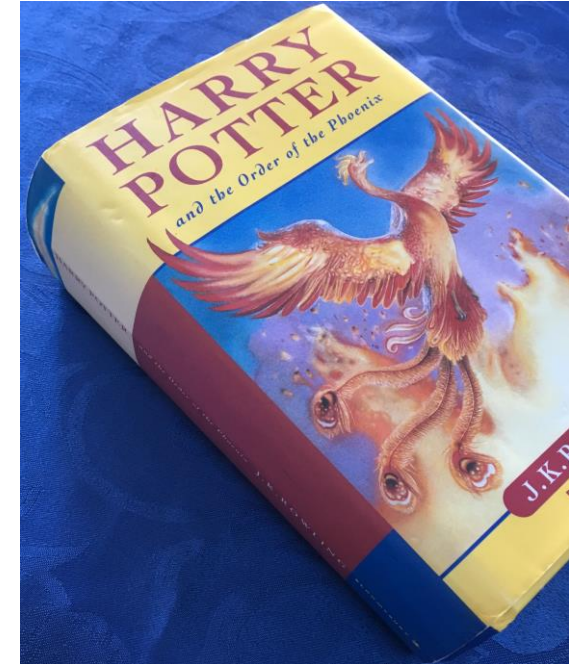


Study Skills Tips: Drafting and Proof-Reading

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Drafting

- Once the brainstorming and planning activities are completed, the next step is getting what you want to write down on paper within your proposed structure.
- Good writing skills will require drafting and re-drafting of what you want to say. It is useful to remember that even professional writers have to re-draft and revise/re-edit their work many times, as they are rarely happy with their first drafts. For example, JK Rowling rewrote her first chapter of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* over 15 times (Now novel, 2016).



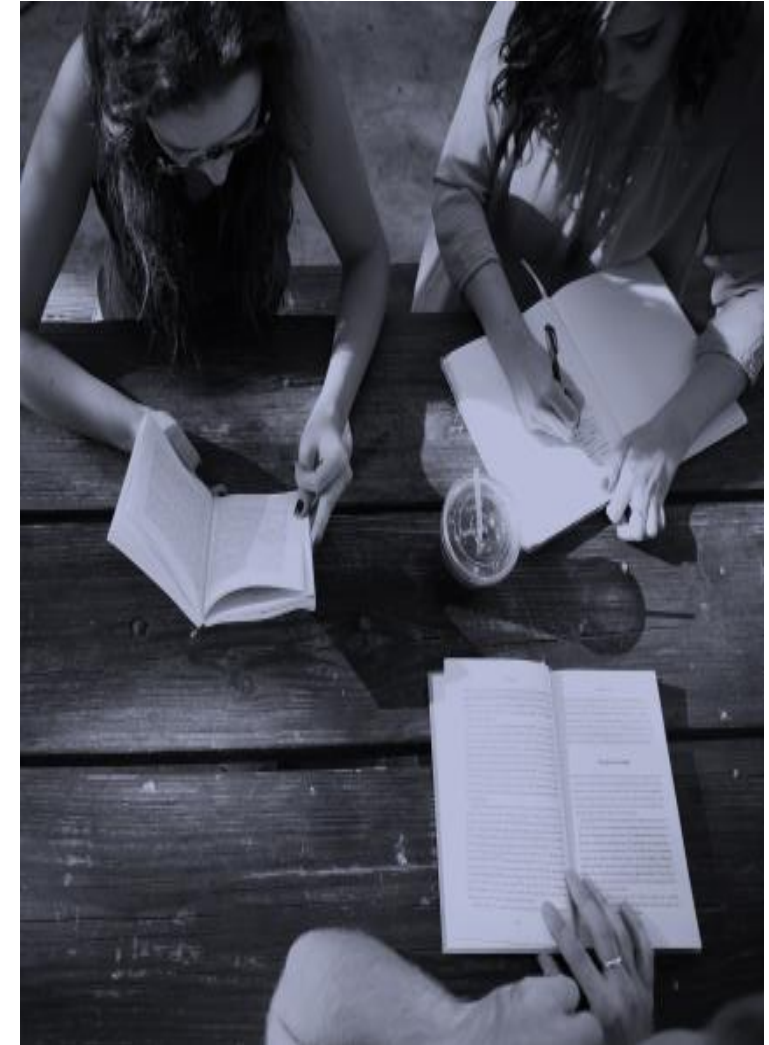
Drafting: Breaking your writing into chunks

1. Tell your reader what you are going to say – **introduction**; as a guide, this should take approximately 10-15% of the available word-count.
2. Say it – the **main body** of your writing; the ideas of which you have already planned and sequenced. As a guide, this should take approximately 70-80% of the available word-count.
3. Remind them what has been said – **conclusion**; as a guide, this should take approximately 10-15% of the available word-count.

Please note: these word count suggestions are only a rough guide and should be calculated according to the individual requirements of each assignment.

Drafting (and redrafting!)

- Few of us enjoy the drafting process, but it is a vital component.
- Many people with literacy-related difficulties have poor working memories and therefore find it difficult to combine all the necessary elements in the writing process at once.
- Most writers benefit from the re-drafting process during which we need to check for:
 - The quality of the thinking
 - The sequencing of ideas/quality of the argument
 - The quality of the sentence construction
 - The accuracy of the spelling



Proofreading

Efficient proofreading is an **active** process.

It may be helpful to think about proof-reading techniques into two separate categories.

1. Checking 'secretarial skills':

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Paragraph layout

2. Checking 'authorial skills':

- How the meaning and the structure of the argument or ideas are set out – style, genre etc.



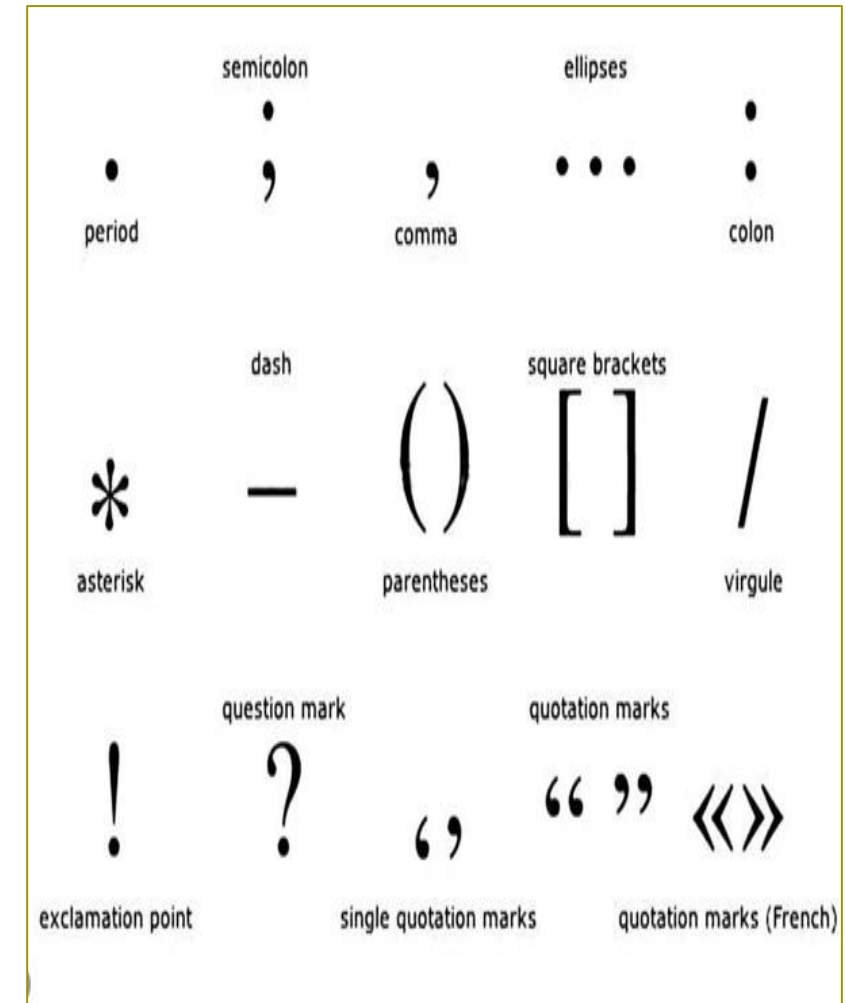
Secretarial skills: checking spelling

- Take a highlighter pen and start at the bottom of the work checking backward to the top. As no meaning can be gained, we tend to see each word exactly as it is written. Highlight any errors.
- Watch out for homophones – these will often not be picked up as spelling mistakes in a quick read through. These need to be checked by reading from the beginning of the work to the end, carefully focusing on the meaning of the words in context.



Secretarial skills: checking punctuation

- Take a different coloured highlighter pen. Read the work from the beginning to the end **out loud**. Highlight any errors spotted.
- Consider how the punctuation has been used – would any additions help make the meaning clearer?
- At sentence level – consider if any sentences are difficult to follow, perhaps because they are too long. Think how punctuation could be used to split it down.
- Do the words ‘then’, ‘and’ or ‘next’ keep appearing so that the paragraph is just one long sentence? Again, consider how the paragraph can be re-drafted using shorter sentence units.



Authorial skills: checking for meaning/purpose

Authorial skills are concerned with the content of the written work and its style. Key things to focus upon when proof-reading assignments, reports etc. are:

- **Meaning** – are your ideas clear, is there a clear sequence to your ideas (argument)? Are sentences well-formed (e.g. subject-verb agreement)?
- **Purpose** – does your writing fulfil its stated purpose: report on a topic in a structured way, set out an argument using an academic stance, or informally get across information (e.g. a blog post).
- **Style** – does the style, the word choice, the ‘stance’ you take match the purpose of the piece (e.g. academic language, 3rd person, passive voice etc.).

Assistive technology

- Use text-to-speech software to listen back to what has been written whilst proof-reading.
- Use proof-reading software for checking grammar and punctuation.
- Use other facilities available on most IT/digital devices:
 - Spell-checking facilities
 - Text-prediction software
 - Auto-correction function



References

- Dupree, J. (2005) *Help Students Improve Their Study Skills*. London: David Fulton
- Nownovel.com (2016) *Five great writing tips from J.K. Rowling* available from: <https://www.nownovel.com/blog/five-great-writing-tips-from-j-k-rowling> (Accessed: 27 February 2019)

Useful University Grammar Links

- Academic Phrasebank: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>
- Academic Writing: <https://libguides.reading.ac.uk/writing/proof-reading#s-lg-box-11008361>
- Grammar Resource: <https://canvas.hull.ac.uk/courses/213>
- Improve your Writing: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/page_01.htm