

Reading Aloud

Wait...What?

Reading your paper aloud or having someone read it to you is a great way to edit your work in preparation for handing it in. When you read your work silently to yourself, your brain may “autocorrect” the same way your phone would, and you could miss some things that you would catch if you read it out loud.

The reason for this is that we all have a lot more practice at speaking and listening than we do writing and editing on paper. Our brain will catch more mistakes and awkward phrases if we hear it audibly.

The order of things

Reading your paper out loud from top to bottom will help you brain and any other listener to understand the flow of your ideas. You may realize as you’re reading that you need to rearrange some ideas, or change the flow of your main points to help them make more sense. You may also realize that you went from one idea to the next too abruptly, and you need to add a transition.

Spelling, grammar, etc.

Sometimes when we are reading silently to ourselves, our brain will automatically correct what we see on the page. If we read it out loud, those grammatical errors, or awkward sentences will be hard to say, so our brain won’t be able to change them without us taking note of it.

Even if the grammar and spelling is correct, our sentences may be too long, or too short, or our tone may be too formal or informal, or something may sound overly sarcastic when we read it out loud, and we didn’t intend for it to sound that way at all! When you can hear the tone of your voice, you can understand what kind of impression you may be leaving to the reader, and you may want to change it before you hand your paper in.

Strategies

- Read your paper from a printed paper copy, or sit at your computer so that as you’re reading, you can mark areas that you want to change or revisit later.
- Use your finger or your cursor to “follow along” as you’re reading. This helps you avoid the autocorrect impulse of your brain.
- If you don’t like the idea of reading out loud to yourself in an empty room, recruit a friend or paper reviewer to help you. You may even benefit from having them read it out loud to you, so you can hear another voice and process the information as if it’s the first time you’re hearing it. If you notice that they stumble or pause or seem lost while reading your work, that area probably needs attention in some way. Follow along on your own printed copy or have your computer in front of you so you can mark areas that need revisiting.