

AVOIDING MISTAKES IN YOUR OWN COPY



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1 Pick out and highlight the who, what, when, where, why and how in a story. You'll see whether you've left out any key facts and whether the facts are in a logical order.

2 Know what you don't know — and prepare to conquer your weaknesses. Whether you have trouble with subject-verb agreement, tense shifts or spelling, listen to your inner alarm and have a stylebook or website handy to double-check yourself.

3 Print out a copy of your story and read it aloud, touching every word with a pen or pencil to catch those editing mistakes that you might miss with just a cursory reading.

4 Print out your story with different margins, fonts or colors to trick your brain into thinking it is seeing something new. You will often find mistakes you would otherwise have missed.

5 Do not multitask when copyediting. Prioritize the list of errors you are looking for and then work down the list, hitting the most important ones first. You can't find all the spelling and grammar errors in a story in one pass.

6 Sweat the small stuff. Articles — “a,” “an” and “the” — are often misused. And it's easy to overlook “or” when you mean “of” or “it” when you mean “is.”