COMMUNICATIONS
PROOFREADER’S “TRICKS”

After working on a document for hours and in multiple versions, it’s often hard to catch misspelled words, inaccurate punctuation or incorrect grammar. Here are some “tricks” to help you find those sometimes elusive errors.

- **PRINT THE DOCUMENT.**
  Reading a printed copy often allows you to catch mistakes you miss on a computer screen.

- **READ SLOWLY.**
  Proofreading is not a rush job.

- **READ THE DOCUMENT ALOUD.**
  This allows you to hear a problem such as a missing word that you missed reading the document silently.

- **PROOF FOR ONE TYPE OF ERROR AT A TIME.**
  For example, first concentrate on spelling, then look at content only, then proof only headlines and subheads, then check for missing and/or extra spaces, etc.

- **REVIEW ONE WORD OR LINE AT A TIME.**
  Read by pointing with your finger word by word, or use a ruler or blank piece of paper to isolate the line you are reading.

- **CREATE YOUR OWN PROOFREADING CHECKLIST.**
  Keep a list of your most common errors (or of the writers you are proofing) and make sure to check for those specific problems.

- **LOOK AT THE DOCUMENT FROM THE SIDE OR UPSIDE DOWN.**
  This allows you to focus on spacing and lets you view the text from a different direction.

- **READ SECTIONS OUT OF ORDER.**
  For example, read from the bottom up or the middle first.

- **CIRCLE EVERY PUNCTUATION MARK.**
  This forces you to look at punctuation marks individually.

- **READ TEXT BACKWARDS.**
  This helps catch spelling errors, since it keep your focus on individual words rather than sentences.

- **TAKE TURNS WITH ANOTHER PERSON READING THE DOCUMENT ALOUD.**
  The one not reading can follow along by reading the text. This helps catch a variety of errors, including incorrect words and awkward-sounding phrases.

- **DON’T ASSUME.**
  If something does not seem right to you, look it up.

- **HAVE SOMEONE ELSE READ THE DOCUMENT.**
  They may immediately find errors that you have missed.

- **TAKE A REST.**
  Set the document aside for a couple hours or a day to allow the text to be less familiar to you. Then look at it again.