

Tutoring vs. Proofreading

or

What does it mean that tutors don't proofread?

A proofreader takes a client's written work and then works independently to correct every error. It's a solo process. The writer and the proofreader could both work without ever actually meeting.

A tutor starts by giving the client the opportunity to set the agenda for how his or her writing will improve. Tutoring begins as a conversation, a social activity. The tutor works with the writer to help the writer understand how to clarify and polish his or her own writing.

The Proofreading Process

- Finds every error
- Corrects every error
- Uses editing marks that might seem mysterious to the non-professional

A proofreader thinks in terms of eradicating errors, more than improving thought and clarity of ideas.

A proofreader takes over another person's writing, without engaging the writer to find out what he or she wants to say and without giving the writer final responsibility for corrections.

The Tutoring Process

- Works with the writer to decide whether to focus on sentence-level or larger issues
- Identifies examples of the grammatical and mechanical difficulties and gives the writer practice in avoiding those errors—on this paper and on future ones
- Discusses the decisions with the writer

Tutors use their knowledge and expertise to improve the given piece of writing in specific ways and to make writers more aware of how they can foster those improvements on their own.

Tutors can think more clearly about the various options available for clarifying or improving an essay because they know grammar rules and have experience editing, but they don't always use technical language with writers.

Tutors make an effort to communicate with the client about how he or she might learn from this writing activity to write stronger prose the next time.