EDITING/PROOFREADING STRATEGIES

- **Identify your own personal patterns of error and use as a checklist.**
  Instead of trying to correct one item at a time, read for those patterns of error you tend to make.

- **Use a hierarchy of error patterns.**
  Some errors count more with some readers than others do. Use the typical academic hierarchy on the back—the Top Ten Conventions—to determine which patterns of error to read for first.

  Note: The hierarchy shifts if there is an accumulation of error of one type or if the pattern of error is especially prejudicial. For example, misspelling short, high frequency words, such as “its” tends to have more of a negative (prejudicial) effect on the reader than a missing comma, unless the missing comma alters the meaning significantly.

- **Read aloud.**
  Reading aloud enables us to hear mistakes that we sometimes do not catch when reading silently.

- **Read in cycles, reading backward sentence by sentence.**
  Reading a draft backward breaks the usual context of meaning and helps writers “see” errors more readily.

- **Use a code to mark the errors first; fix errors later.**
  First identify errors by marking them in the margins with checkmarks or editing symbols. Once all the errors are identified, go back and fix them.

- **Refer to resources—handbooks and Research and Writing Studio handouts.**
  Even proficient writers need to verify conventions. When in doubt, use the name of the error pattern to find more information, including correct examples.

- **Get another reader.**
  While we do not want to rely on other readers exclusively, careful writers routinely get a second (or third) opinion.

- **Let time elapse between drafting and editing.**
  Leaving the draft alone for a time after drafting can help writers edit their drafts with fresh eyes.
TOP TEN WRITING CONVENTIONS
A Hierarchy of Error

1. **Use clear and distinct sentence boundaries.**
   - **NO:** Writing is important to me, it makes me feel more alive.
   - **YES:** Writing is important to me; it makes me feel more alive.

2. **Make verbs agree with their subjects in number.**
   - **NO:** The writers in our class works hard on their papers.
   - **YES:** The writers in our class work hard on their papers.

3. **Choose pronouns correctly.**
   - **NO:** Just between you and I, writing is more important than many things.
   - **YES:** Just between you and me, writing is more important than many things.

4. **Place modifiers near what they modify in a sentence.**
   - **NO:** My car was on the way to the mechanic with rear-end trouble when the joint gave way.
   - **YES:** My car with rear-end trouble was on the way to the mechanic when the joint gave way.

5. **Use parallel grammatical forms when joining items in a series.**
   - **NO:** She’s intelligent, unselfish, and always does the kind thing.
   - **YES:** She’s intelligent, unselfish, and thoughtful.

6. **Use conventional spellings, especially for sound-alikes.**
   - **NO:** The committee work had it’s affect on me.
   - **YES:** The committee work had its effect on me.

7. **Use the single comma and the pair of commas appropriately.**
   - **NO:** When all is said and done a lot more is said than done.
   - **YES:** When all is said and done, a lot more is said than done.

8. **Use quotation marks with other punctuation according to convention.**
   - **NO:** The poem highlighted the mind’s way of “exchanging shape for shade”.
   - **YES:** The poem highlighted the mind’s way of “exchanging shape for shade.”

9. **Use apostrophes to show contracted form and for possession.**
   - **NO:** Originally, the cuffs’ of mens pants were used for cigar ashes.
   - **YES:** Originally, the cuffs of men’s pants were used for cigar ashes.

10. **Capitalize proper nouns and words derived from them.**
    - **NO:** Her Winter schedule includes Anthropology and english.
    - **YES:** Her winter schedule includes anthropology and English.