

LUC WRITING CENTER – “PROOFS”

Understanding the Process: If a peer-reviewed journal accepts your essay for publication, often you will receive an edited copy of your essay via email or mail that contains suggestions, criticism, and other changes from the journal’s editor intended to improve your paper. This document is called the “proofs,” because it has been proofread and requires further editing. Sometimes, either prior to or accompanying your proofs, you will also receive criticism and advice, also intended to improve your paper, from two anonymous reviewers (A&B) affiliated with the editor, both experts in their academic field. Instead of being offended or hurt by their comments, accept as much of their advice as you can and integrate their recommended changes into your next essay draft. Expert help will guarantee that your essay doesn’t get challenged in the public forum by other academics after publication, just as having a peer-reviewer or Writing Center tutor critique a first or second draft saves you from making a bad grade in your final draft for a class. Make a list of both reviewers’ criticism and make these changes one by one, ensuring you haven’t forgotten any of them.

Strategizing: Besides making alterations to your essay suggested by the two anonymous reviewers, you will need to make the editor’s corrections in your proofs. Usually these come in the form of sentence-level “track changes” to your Microsoft Word document, while larger emendations are listed in the body of your email from the editor or at the end of the proofs. Unless the editor or anonymous reviewers are demonstrably mistaken in part of their academic advice, or you are unable to agree with their moral assumptions for conscientious, or similar reasons, you should make all changes. If you can’t, explain why to the editor in specific, but courteous detail. At this stage, depending on how your information is received, you may need to withdraw your essay from the peer-review process and submit it to another journal. If you do so, make sure that the editor is aware of your decision to prevent the journal’s publication being delayed, and endeavor to end the correspondence cordially and professionally.

Making Revisions: In Word’s track changes, you can “Accept” or “Reject” advice for minor sentence-level changes. If your editor writes a sentence as an example for how you should rephrase a sentence or concept, do not simply replace that sentence with the suggested one. Instead, try to formulate your own, so that the essay remains your own work and exemplifies your own thought process. You may need to conduct new research or revisit sources you have previously consulted. Guarantee that you understand the material and are drawing the correct conclusions from prior academic research, giving full credit to research you cite. Some of those authors may very well read your essay and will not be impressed if you have stolen their ideas without giving them credit. If you wrote the essay for a class or project, it’s a good idea to consult the professor or researcher who graded it, and ask them for advice concerning your proofs.

Submitting: Your finished proofs should be a clear document without any unaltered track changes. Remember, quick, thorough revision and respectful observation of deadlines impresses editors with your professionalism! Email or mail your corrected proofs back to the editor, briefly stating that you have made the changes, and thank your editor and the anonymous reviewers for their ongoing work. This process may occur once or twice more before your essay appears in its finished form in the pages of a published, peer-reviewed journal.