



New Jersey Department of Education Professional Development Provider #539
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Murphy's Roof Preading Tips (*a.k.a. Murphy's Proofreading Tips*)

Few of us can hire our own editors to clean up our messes so here are some of Peter Murphy's favorite things to look out for!

- **Spelling** - Use spell check, but beware of "spell check orphans" otherwise known as homonyms. Some of the most common are: its / it's, lose / loose, principal / principle, to / too / two and whose / who's.
- **Punctuation** -
 - Quotation Marks - On this side of the Atlantic we put the comma and period inside quotation marks. Don't argue with me. It's a law. If you go ex-pat to Britain, then you can put it on the outside. Plus, you'll get free health care.
 - Commas - When in doubt leave them out. Where, do they, all come, from?
- **Usage** - Why do most chiropractors say "Lay down" instead of "Lie down"? They must teach it in chiropractic school to confound retired English teachers. How much fun is that?
 - Why is the question mark in the above sentence outside of the quotation marks? Here's the rule. If the question is part of the quotation, the question mark goes inside. The same rule applies to exclamation points.
 - Did the chiropractor say, "Lie down"?
 - Did the chiropractor say, "Why don't you lie down?"
 - Never mind, as long as he did not say, "Lay down."
- Be aware of your own spelling and usage demons and double check them. I should have taken more time hemming and hawing over Hemingway.

Then when it looks like your darling is ready to go, try these steps before you make it public:

- Be Patient. Haste makes stupid mistakes.
- Print it out and read it again with pencil in hand.
- Read it aloud if it's not too long.
- The experts say to read it backwards. This never worked for me, but it might work for you.
- Have someone else read it, especially if it's very important.
- If you have the time, put it away and return to it a day or two later.

Adapted from the March 2009 Murphy Writing Newsletter Writing Tip
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