Editing is a crucial part of the writing process. When drafting, writers simply must direct attention to the sentence level and work to produce precise and polished prose. And, as is the case when developing proficiency in any feature of college writing, learning how to edit requires time, practice, and patience.

Tutors at the Knight Institute Writing Walk-In Service are available to provide certain kinds of sentence-level support. Tutors will clarify rules, explain conventions, provide examples, and guide writers as they revise their own sentences. Tutors will discuss style, language, and rhetorical choices. But tutors are not editors – they cannot correct grammar, syntax, punctuation, or typographical errors.

Here are several reasons for this policy:

• First, there is little to no pedagogical value in having a tutor edit a student’s paper. Writers do not learn when other people correct errors for them. The Writing Walk-In Service’s primary goal is to ensure that students have access to learning opportunities, so during tutoring sessions, tutors use specific pieces of writing to engage broader discussion about academic writing and to encourage robust interventions into student writing processes.

• Second, copyediting someone else’s writing requires a highly specialized skill set. Writing tutors are not professional editors; they simply do not have the training, experience, or desire to perform such technical work.

• Third, tutors are Cornell University students themselves. They cannot complete assignments for other students. As such, deep collaboration of this kind – line by line editing – could violate Cornell University’s Code of Academic Integrity and thus put students and tutors at risk.

If you want someone to proofread or copyedit for you, you can hire a professional service. (Search online for a local or internet-based company.) Be certain, though, to consult your instructor as such collaboration may be a violation of Cornell University’s Code of Academic Integrity.

The Knight Institute Writing Walk-In Service
One-on-one tutoring at any stage of the writing process.
www.arts.cornell.edu/writing
Editing is hard work. Even writers who take the process very seriously can come up against severe obstacles as they home in on the word, paragraph, or page: Writers may be fatigued or stressed, or inexperienced. They might speak and write other languages, or they might be managing learning differences or disabilities. They might have knowledge gaps or unevenly developed skills. They might be reaching to learn.

Tutors at the Knight Institute Writing Walk-In Service are eager to help writers become more confident, efficient, and effective readers and editors of their own writing. Here are several typical strategies for working together:

• **LOCATE PATTERNS OF ERROR** Writing tutors might read through papers (3-5 pages) and identify ONLY one or two patterns of error (run-on sentences or subject-verb agreement, for instance). Writing tutors might circle recurring errors throughout the short drafts or put checkmarks in the papers’ margins to indicate problems with recurring errors in the marked lines. Writing tutors will then explain the errors and work with writers to correct them.

• **SELECT A PASSAGE OF TEXT** Writing tutors might read through a SINGLE section of a paper (one paragraph, perhaps, but no more than one page) and identify a range of errors. Writing tutors might circle the errors throughout the short section or put checkmarks in the papers’ margins to indicate problems in the marked lines.

• **READ OUT LOUD** Writing tutors can listen as writers read aloud papers (no more than 3-5 pages) and mark any places where writers say something different than what is on the page. Alternatively, writing tutors might read papers out loud while writers mark any places that do not sound as intended.

The Knight Institute Writing Walk-In Service is committed to the teaching and learning of writing and eager to work with writers who are interested in:

• understanding the fundamental features of college-level writing;
• using writing to clarify, complicate, and refine ideas;
• exploring more flexible writing strategies.

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