

NAPLAN Self-Editing Checklist: 30 Proven Proofreading Moves (Years 3–9)

A Comprehensive Guide for Australian Students

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Introduction

Welcome to your comprehensive guide for mastering self-editing skills specifically designed for NAPLAN writing assessment. This resource contains 30 proven proofreading strategies that will help you improve your writing and achieve better results in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 NAPLAN tests.

Why Self-Editing Matters: Research shows that students who develop strong self-editing skills demonstrate significant improvement in their writing quality and NAPLAN performance. Self-editing helps you become an independent writer who can identify and correct errors before submission.

This guide is structured to help you systematically improve four key areas of your writing:

- **Content and Ideas** – Making your writing interesting and well-developed
- **Structure and Organisation** – Arranging your ideas logically
- **Language and Vocabulary** – Using precise and engaging words
- **Technical Accuracy** – Correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar

How to Use This Guide: Each "move" includes a clear explanation, practical steps, and examples. Practice these strategies regularly with your writing, not just during test preparation. The more you use these techniques, the more automatic they become.

Understanding NAPLAN Writing Assessment

NAPLAN writing tests assess your ability to produce clear, well-organised texts in Standard Australian English. You'll be asked to write either a narrative (story) or persuasive text based on a given prompt.

The 10 NAPLAN Marking Criteria:

1. **Audience** – How well you engage and orient the reader
2. **Text Structure** – Organisation of your narrative or persuasive features

3. **Ideas** – Development and crafting of ideas
4. **Character and Setting** – (Narrative) or Persuasive Devices
5. **Vocabulary** – Range and precision of word choices
6. **Cohesion** – How well your text flows and connects
7. **Paragraphing** – Effective organisation of text into paragraphs
8. **Sentence Structure** – Variety and correctness of sentences
9. **Punctuation** – Correct and appropriate punctuation use
10. **Spelling** – Accuracy and difficulty of words used

The following 30 proofreading moves are designed to help you excel in all these areas. Each move targets specific aspects of good writing and provides practical steps you can follow during your editing process.

Section 1: Content and Ideas (Moves 1-8)

Strong content and well-developed ideas are the foundation of excellent writing. These moves will help you create engaging, substantial content that captivates your readers and meets NAPLAN expectations.

Move 1: Check Your Story Hook or Opening Statement

Your opening sentence should immediately grab the reader's attention and set the tone for your entire piece. For narratives, create intrigue or establish atmosphere. For persuasive texts, present a compelling statement or question.

Weak: *"This story is about a boy who found a box."*

Strong: *"The rusty metal box beneath the floorboards seemed to whisper secrets from another time."*

Move 2: Ensure Ideas Connect to Your Main Theme

Every idea in your writing should contribute to your central story or argument. Remove any details that don't support your main purpose, and strengthen connections between related ideas.

Ask yourself: *"Does this sentence help tell my story or support my argument? If not, should I revise it or remove it?"*

Move 3: Add Specific Details and Examples

Replace general statements with specific, concrete details that help readers visualise your ideas. Use sensory details (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) to bring your writing to life.

General: *"The dog was big."*

Specific: *"The golden retriever's tail knocked over three coffee cups as it bounded through the café."*

Move 4: Develop Your Characters (Narrative) or Arguments (Persuasive)

For narratives, ensure characters have distinct personalities, motivations, and realistic dialogue. For persuasive texts, develop each argument fully with evidence and examples.

Character development: *Show personality through actions, speech, and thoughts rather than just describing traits.*

Move 5: Check for Logical Sequence

Ensure events in your narrative follow a logical order, or that arguments in your persuasive text build upon each other effectively. Each paragraph should flow naturally to the next.

Questions to ask: *"What happens first, then next? Do my arguments build from weakest to strongest or follow another logical pattern?"*

Move 6: Strengthen Your Conflict or Central Argument

Every good narrative needs conflict or tension to drive the story forward. Every persuasive text needs a clear, debatable central argument. Ensure yours is well-developed and engaging.

Narrative: *The problem your character faces should create genuine tension.*

Persuasive: *Your position should be clear and worth arguing about.*

Move 7: Improve Your Resolution or Conclusion

Avoid weak endings like "it was all a dream" or "in conclusion" followed by repetition. Create satisfying resolutions that address the main conflict or compelling conclusions that reinforce your argument.

Strong conclusion techniques: *Return to your opening image, show character growth, issue a call to action, or pose a thought-provoking question.*

Move 8: Eliminate Unnecessary Information

Remove details that don't advance your story or support your argument. Every sentence should serve a purpose. If you can't explain why a detail is important, consider removing it.

Test: *Cover a sentence with your hand. Does the paragraph still make sense? If yes, you might not need that sentence.*

Section 2: Structure and Organisation

(Moves 9-16)

Well-organised writing helps readers follow your ideas easily. These moves focus on paragraph structure, transitions, and the overall flow of your text from beginning to end.

Move 9: Check Your Paragraph Breaks

Each paragraph should focus on one main idea or event. Start a new paragraph when you change time, place, speaker, or topic. Avoid paragraphs that are too long (more than 6-8 sentences) or too short (1-2 sentences).

New paragraph signals: *New speaker in dialogue, change of scene, new time period, different main idea.*

Move 10: Add Effective Transitions

Use transitional words and phrases to connect ideas between and within paragraphs. This helps your writing flow smoothly and shows relationships between ideas.

Time transitions: *Meanwhile, later, suddenly, afterwards*

Argument transitions: *Furthermore, however, on the other hand, as a result*

Move 11: Strengthen Your Topic Sentences

Each paragraph should begin with a clear topic sentence that introduces the main idea. This helps readers understand what the paragraph will be about and how it fits into your overall text.

Effective topic sentence: *States the main idea clearly and connects to your overall theme or argument.*

Move 12: Ensure Proper Text Structure

Narratives should have orientation (setting/characters), complication (problem), and resolution. Persuasive texts should have introduction, body paragraphs with arguments, and conclusion.

Narrative check: *Do I establish the setting and characters early? Is there a clear problem? How is it resolved?*

Move 13: Balance Your Paragraph Lengths

Vary your paragraph lengths for better reading rhythm, but ensure each paragraph fully develops its main idea. Very short paragraphs can seem underdeveloped; very long ones can be overwhelming.

Good balance: *Most paragraphs 3-6 sentences, with occasional shorter ones for emphasis or longer ones for complex ideas.*

Move 14: Check Your Introduction and Conclusion Balance

Your introduction should be engaging but not too long (usually 1-2 paragraphs). Your conclusion should be satisfying and proportional to your text length. Neither should dominate your piece.

Proportion guide: *Introduction ~20%, body ~60%, conclusion ~20% of your total text.*

Move 15: Improve Information Flow

Arrange information in a logical order that builds understanding. Don't jump between ideas randomly. Group related information together and present it in a sequence that makes sense.

Logical orders: *Chronological (time order), spatial (location), importance (strongest argument last), cause and effect.*

Move 16: Eliminate Repetitive Structure

Vary how you begin paragraphs and sentences. Avoid starting every paragraph the same way or using identical sentence patterns throughout your text.

Avoid: *Starting every paragraph with "Then..." or "Another reason is..."*

Instead: *Vary your paragraph and sentence beginnings for better flow.*

Section 3: Language and Vocabulary

(Moves 17-22)

Precise, engaging language elevates your writing from good to excellent. These moves help you choose words that create impact, convey meaning clearly, and demonstrate sophisticated vocabulary use.

Move 17: Replace Weak Verbs with Strong Action Words

Replace overused verbs like "said," "went," "got," and "was" with more specific, vivid alternatives. Strong verbs make your writing more engaging and precise.

Weak: "She said angrily" → **Strong:** "She snapped"

Weak: "He went quickly" → **Strong:** "He sprinted"

Move 18: Add Precise Adjectives and Adverbs

Choose specific descriptive words that create clear images in readers' minds. Avoid overusing general adjectives like "nice," "good," "big," or "very." Use adjectives and adverbs that add meaningful information.

General: "It was a very big, nice house"

Precise: "It was a sprawling, Victorian mansion"

Move 19: Use Varied Sentence Beginnings

Avoid starting every sentence with the subject. Begin sentences with adverbs, prepositional phrases, dependent clauses, or other structures to create rhythm and interest in your writing.

Varied beginnings:

- "Cautiously, Emma opened the door." (adverb)

- *"Under the bridge, treasure lay hidden."* (prepositional phrase)
- *"Although tired, he continued reading."* (dependent clause)

Move 20: Incorporate Figurative Language

Use similes, metaphors, and personification to make your writing more engaging and memorable. However, ensure figurative language fits naturally and doesn't seem forced or excessive.

Simile: *"Her voice was like velvet"*

Metaphor: *"The city was a concrete jungle"*

Personification: *"The wind whispered secrets"*

Move 21: Check for Word Repetition

Identify words you've used multiple times and replace some instances with synonyms or rephrase sentences. This demonstrates vocabulary range and prevents monotonous reading.

Repetitive: *"The big dog chased the big ball across the big yard."*

Varied: *"The enormous dog chased the oversized ball across the sprawling yard."*

Move 22: Ensure Age-Appropriate Vocabulary

Use sophisticated vocabulary that demonstrates your knowledge, but ensure you use words correctly. It's better to use simpler words correctly than complex words incorrectly.

Tip: *If you're unsure about a word's meaning or spelling, consider using a word you know well instead of risking an error.*

Section 4: Technical Accuracy (Moves 23-30)

Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and grammar demonstrates your mastery of written English conventions. These final moves help you polish your writing to professional standards.

Move 23: Check Every Sentence for Completeness

Ensure each sentence has a subject and predicate and expresses a complete thought. Fix sentence fragments and run-on sentences by combining or separating ideas appropriately.

Fragment: *"Running through the forest." (missing subject)*

Complete: *"Sarah was running through the forest."*

Move 24: Verify Subject-Verb Agreement

Ensure subjects and verbs agree in number (singular subjects with singular verbs, plural subjects with plural verbs). Pay special attention to complex sentences and collective nouns.

Incorrect: *"The group of students were excited."*

Correct: *"The group of students was excited." (group = singular subject)*

Move 25: Review All Punctuation Marks

Check that every sentence ends with appropriate punctuation. Verify proper use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, and other punctuation. When in doubt, read sentences aloud to hear natural pauses.

Comma use: *Use commas in lists, before coordinating conjunctions in compound sentences, and to separate dependent clauses.*

Move 26: Proofread for Common Spelling Errors

Focus on words you commonly misspell and homophones (words that sound alike but have different spellings). Create a mental list of your frequent spelling mistakes to check specifically.

Common homophones: *their/there/they're, your/you're, its/it's, to/too/two, where/wear/were*

Move 27: Check Dialogue Punctuation

Ensure proper punctuation in dialogue: quotation marks around spoken words, commas before speech tags, new paragraphs for new speakers, and correct capitalisation within quotes.

Correct dialogue:

"I can't believe it," she whispered.

"What happened?" asked Tom.

Move 28: Verify Proper Tense Consistency

Maintain consistent verb tenses throughout your writing unless you're intentionally shifting time periods. Most narratives work well in past tense; most persuasive texts use present tense.

Inconsistent: *"She walked to school and sees her friend."*

Consistent: *"She walked to school and saw her friend."*

Move 29: Check Capitalisation Rules

Capitalise the first word of sentences, proper nouns (names of people, places, organisations), and the first word in dialogue. Don't capitalise common nouns unless they begin sentences.

Proper nouns: *Australia, Brisbane River, Sunshine Coast Grammar School, Monday, December*

Move 30: Final Read-Through for Flow and Clarity

Read your entire text aloud (or silently but carefully) one final time. Listen for awkward phrasing, unclear meanings, or anything that doesn't sound right. Trust your ear—if something sounds wrong, it probably needs revision.

Final check questions: *Does this make sense? Would a reader understand my meaning? Does it sound natural when read aloud?*

Quick Reference Checklist

Use this checklist during your 5-minute editing time in NAPLAN or any writing task. Focus on the most important areas for your year level and the specific areas where you commonly make mistakes.

Content and Ideas ✓

- ☐ Strong opening that hooks the reader
- ☐ All ideas connect to main theme/story
- ☐ Specific details and examples included
- ☐ Characters/arguments well-developed
- ☐ Clear conflict or central argument
- ☐ Satisfying resolution/conclusion

Structure and Organisation ✓

- ☐ Appropriate paragraph breaks
- ☐ Effective transitions between ideas
- ☐ Clear topic sentences
- ☐ Logical information flow
- ☐ Proper text structure (orientation/complication/resolution or intro/body/conclusion)

Language and Vocabulary ✓

- ☐ Strong action verbs (not just "said," "went," "got")
- ☐ Precise adjectives and adverbs
- ☐ Varied sentence beginnings
- ☐ Appropriate figurative language
- ☐ No unnecessary word repetition

Technical Accuracy ✓

- ☐ All sentences complete (no fragments)
- ☐ Subject-verb agreement correct
- ☐ Proper punctuation (especially end marks and commas)
- ☐ Spelling checked (especially homophones)
- ☐ Dialogue punctuated correctly
- ☐ Consistent tense throughout
- ☐ Proper capitalisation
- ☐ Final read-through completed

Remember: You don't need to check every item every time. Focus on your areas for improvement and the criteria most important for your year level. With practice, these moves will become second nature, and your writing will consistently improve.

Success Tip: Practice these moves regularly with any writing you do, not just NAPLAN preparation. The more you use these strategies, the more naturally they'll come to you during

test situations. Good luck with your NAPLAN writing assessment!

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