

## PROOF READING

### The Final Stage of Writing

- Before proof reading, write a structured, reasoned decision;
- well planned, logical, succinct and simple;
- use templates, word processing functions and PINS guidance to help but not as a straitjacket;
- keep the page layout neat and straightforward.

### The Importance of Proof Reading

- Careless errors and bad presentation undermine the credibility of even otherwise well written work;
- the parties lose confidence in the Inspector and the inquiry/confirmation process;
- errors lead to justified complaints - one measure of PINS' (and Inspectors') quality targets.

### A Task in its Own Right

- Clear your desk or move to a clear table;
- do not work in a distracting clutter;
- read on a surface, not sitting in an easy chair or sofa with the document in your hands;
- set aside specific time ;
- do not fit proof reading into odd moments;
- professional proof readers recommend that to maintain highest levels of alertness and concentration, proof reading should be planned in time slots not longer than 20 minutes;
- sleep on a document before proof reading it the following morning;
- try to come to the document as if you had never seen it before: as will the next person to see it.

### Approaches to proof reading

- Get someone else to do it for you;
- do it with someone else - they should read one copy out loud while you check another copy;
- read out loud to yourself;

- read line by line with a sheet of paper covering the lower part of the page;
- read critical passages backwards.

## **The 5 Stages**

- Professional content
- Accuracy
- Presentation
- English
- Readability

All of which might be remembered by the nifty mnemonic "P A P E R"

### ***Stage 1: Professional Content***

have you referred to the correct legislation?  
 does your reasoning conflict with guidance or accepted conventions?  
 have you taken account of recent relevant case law?  
 is your line of reasoning convincing?  
 does your decision flow naturally from the facts and the reasoning?

### ***Stage 2: Accuracy***

numbers including references, addresses etc  
 names, including people and places  
 dimensions - normally qualify with 'about' or something similar  
 compass points  
 in fact, all facts

### ***Stage 3: Presentation***

does it conform to the PINS Template?  
 have you used appropriate side and sub-headings?  
 are the headers and footers correct for the case?  
 is the presentation consistent?  
 are the paragraph numbering and page numbering sequential?  
 does it look professional?

### ***Stage 4: English***

grammar, phrasing, punctuation, spelling etc

have you used tenses consistently?

have excess words and phrases been eliminated?

do you need to go back over a sentence or paragraph to insert the meaning you intend?

### **Stage 5: Readability**

does the prose flow?

have you used jargon or unusual technical terms?

would a lay person understand what you have said?

do you need to go back over a sentence or paragraph to insert the meaning you intend?

**‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.’**

**“A pill for every ill”**

**- what does that mean?**

### **Don’t do it!**

- Before a reasonable time has elapsed since writing, and you are still mentally involved;
- when you are tired and cannot concentrate fully;
- during meal breaks, child minding or any other distraction; proof reading is not a secondary activity.

### **Spell Checkers - a Cautionary Tail**

*Their know miss steaks in this peace cause aye ewes special soft wear witch  
cheques may spelling. Hit is moor oar less a weigh too quality as yaw Mai  
work. How offer it can knot correct an eerier inn punctuation or grandma;  
an it well not fined words witch are miss used butt spelled write. Four eggs  
ample, a paragraph cud have mini floors but wood bee past by the spell  
chequer. They’re four, the massage is that pouf reading can knot bee token  
fur grunted or offer locked; it is still berry muck reek wired.*