Writing is a complex task. The writer not only works to communicate a clear message but also must make sure the message is stated correctly in standard English. Following are some ways to help you proofread your own papers.

GETTING STARTED:
Read your paper aloud. It is easier to identify errors when you both see and hear what you have written.

Learn from past mistakes. What are the comments and areas of concern pointed out by instructors on previous papers? ____________________________

Read your paper searching for one particular type of error. Read sentence by sentence. Some people find it easier to read from the end of the paper to the beginning. It may be helpful to use a ruler or piece of paper to move through your paper line by line.

ITEMS TO CONSIDER:
You can often correct careless omissions, typos, or repetitions if you just slowly, carefully read your paper. Read for left out words and anything unusual. Circle words you need to look up.

Complete Sentences—Make sure there is a subject, a verb, and a clear thought. (It may help to underline the subject once and the verb twice in each sentence).

Sentence Variety—two complete sentences may be separated by a period (.), a semi-colon (;), or a comma with a conjunction (, and, but, or). Do not use just a comma to separate two sentences.

Pronouns—Check your paper to make sure you have a clear reference for each pronoun (he, she, it, we, they, them, etc). Remember: it’s = it is; its = possessive form

Point of View—Decide on the point of view you will use for your paper, and do not change to another point of view unless it is essential to the meaning. (Academic papers are often written in 3rd person. Check with your teacher for requirements).
1st Person = I, we/us
2nd Person = you
3rd Person = he/him, she/her, they/them, it

Verb Tense—Decide if your paper will be past, present, or future tense. Do not carelessly drift from one tense to another unless there is a reason to change tense.

Subject, Verb Agreement—Choose subjects and verbs that go together
Example: The dog runs across the street, but dogs run across the street.

Writing assistants will not proofread papers for you, but they are available to help you learn to identify errors and show you how to make corrections. Feel free to ask questions and seek help on specific areas of concern.