

5 Fantastic Free Tools to Find Mistakes in Your Writing

These tested and easy aids actually help me create the best reading experience in my articles.



[Alan Lew - Oct 13, 2021](#)

Writing (and editing) has been a part of my entire adult life. As an academic, I spent innumerable hours and days writing my papers and editing and improving those written by others. I also gave many lectures and workshops on how to write for high-impact international journals.

Since my retirement, I have been writing articles for a more general audience. And I have been learning a lot about that market, as well.

Below are some of the tools that I currently use to improve my writing before I publish it.

Readability

[1] HEMMINGWAY EDITOR — <https://hemingwayapp.com/>

- **The Hemingway Editor** is a free readability checker. It gives a readability score and highlights sentences and words that you can simplify to lower the score. It does not check grammar. You can buy a desktop version for about US\$20, but it is *exactly* the same as the web version.
 - I use Hemingway for:
 - (1) checking my Medium articles for complex sentences and unnecessary words, and
 - (2) converting articles written by academics into versions more suited to the general public on [Tourism Geographic](#) (a Medium publication).
 - I do the readability editing either before or after grammar checking. Both approaches seem to work OK.
 - Hemingway does not tag paragraphs that are too long. To me, the longer the paragraph, the harder it is to read. I recommend watching for that on your own.
 - After using it for a few months, I can now catch myself when I write something that is too complicated. Like most academics, I was trained to use complicated sentence structures and words to make myself *sound educated*.
 - This article has a Grade 6 rating, as seen in the figure. That is how most of my Medium articles rate. I have seen academic-based articles range between Grade 11 and 16.
 - A more sophisticated alternative to Hemingway is **Readable** (<https://readable.com/>). It starts at US\$4/month and there is no free version. I have not used it. But if money is not an issue, then it might be worth trying.
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Grammar Checkers

I use two free grammar checkers on everything that I write nowadays. I use two because they find different things. For both of them, I open the grammar checker on the right half of my screen and the document on the left half. (For some reason, Grammarly only wants to be on the right side of the screen.)

I use them in the following order...

FIRST:

[2] QUILLBOT — <https://quillbot.com/grammar-check>

- **QuillBot** is a (1) Grammar Checker, (2) Paraphraser, (3) Summarizer, and (4) Citation Generator. I use the Grammar Checker by cutting and pasting articles or paragraphs into it and going through the suggested changes. I use the Paraphrase tool to get ideas on how to simplify a complicated paragraph or sentence I am struggling with.
- The free version of QuillBot shows more errors than the free version of Grammarly. The paid version of QuillBot adds more features for paraphrasing. The grammar checker seems to be the same in both its free and paid versions. That is why it shows more typos and rephrasing suggestions than Grammarly.
- QuillBot has a browser add-on, but it covers part of your browser window when running. It covers the part of the text in Medium's editor, for example. I could not stop it from doing that, so I removed it. I only use the web version now and am happy with that.

SECOND:

[3] GRAMMARLY — <https://www.grammarly.com/>

- **Grammarly** is probably the best known grammar checker. The paid version is more than I am willing to spend, however. I find the free version works well enough for my needs. I use Grammarly on a paper after using QuillBot first (the reason for that is below).
- A TIP is that the free Grammarly version will identify **all** of the items in your writing that the paid ("Premium") version has identified. But, it will only tell you recommended adjustments for the more serious typos. This is done to persuade you to upgrade. Because the text for the Premium suggestions is underlined in yellow, you can use those highlights to find more corrections to fix on your own. (Note that many of them are not typos, but rather suggested changes.)
— **So, after I fix all the free version typos in an article**, I scan the Premium level items. In many instances, I can figure out and fix the issue that the paid version has found. This is the reason I use Grammarly after I have already used Quillbot. It takes more work to do this last stage, so the fewer suggested changes the better.
- Grammarly has a browser add-on that works on my email and Facebook posts, though it will not work in Medium's editor.

Grammar Checkers have their limits.

They often miss what seems to be an obvious mistake to a native English speaker. But I figure that some help is better than none.

I also find that they miss more errors if the writer is not a native English speaker. This is because a non-native speaker can get the grammar right, but the word selection is incorrect or awkward.

After I run the grammar checkers, I give my articles one more good read before hitting the publish button. Even then, I know there are still some typos and things that could be corrects — especially in longer articles like the ones I tend to write (1,500 words and up).

*Editing revisions is a never ending process. There is **always** room for improvement!*

Title Analyzers

Although few writers like to hear this, **your article Title is the most important thing that you write**. It is what people see first and is what entices them to click on your paper — or not. If you have a subtitle or SEO description, those are second most important. (SEO = *Search Engine Optimization*; more on that below).

Title Analyzers use SEO metrics to estimate the likelihood that people will click on your Title. They are aimed at a general and online reading public. They help you create “*clickbait*”-style Titles.

Academic papers have similar, but slightly different, Title considerations. The SEO Title Analyzers may be less suitable for them. Academics should first read my post on [How to Title Your Academic Journal Article](#). With those tips in mind, you can try an SEO Title Analyzer to improve your *clickability*. But keep in mind that your audience is somewhat different from the general public.

How to Title Your Academic Journal Article: Rules and Tips

Possibly the single most important part of your paper is the title!

Subtitles

Medium.com allows a Subtitle that is separate from the Title. To create a Title on Medium, you probably already know that you type the text at the top of the page, highlight part of it, then click on the large “T” on the pop-up menu.

To create a Subtitle in Medium, you type the text on the line directly below the Title, highlight a part of it, then click on the small “T” on the pop-up menu. If you do not enter a subtitle, Medium will grab the first sentence or so of your article and use that as your subtitle. Medium often shows your Subtitle with your article on its website.

You should see the words “Title” and “Subtitle” to the left of those two lines when you click on either of them at the top of your page. You can also add a “Kicker” by repeating the Subtitle instructions, above, but placing the text immediately above your Title line.

Because some people will see it, I recommend also running your Subtitle through the Title Analyzer. (I always do.)

Another way to see and edit your Title and Subtitle is by clicking on the 3-Dot menu and selecting “Change display title / subtitle”. This allows you to have a Title and Subtitle on your article that is different from what Medium or search engines display. (Yes, there are times when you might want to do that.)

BONUS: SEO Description

Medium writer

[Paul Speed](#) wrote about increasing his readership by [editing his Medium “SEO Description”](#), which is found in “More settings” under the 3-Dot menu. I now edit that for every Medium article I write. It is much longer than the Title and Subtitle, but I what I have learned from the ExactMetrics Headline Analyzer in crafting my SOE Descriptions, as well.

I Changed The SEO For My Story And My Viewings Went Sky High!

How I turned an older article into a runaway success 😊

medium.com

Title Capitalization

[5] CAPITALIZE MY TITLE

<https://capitalizemytitle.com/style/Wiki/>

A Medium editor pointed me to this website when I submitted a paper to her publication that use an academic-style article title. Academic papers tend to only capitalize the first letter in a tile, plus any formal names.

Book titles and articles for the general public tend to capitalize all but articles (a, an, the) and conjunctions (and, or). There are many different styles, and there are many websites that will convert your title to one or more of the styles.

I use the APA style on the [Capitalize My Title](#) website. That website also explains the difference among the 9 Title Styles it offers.

Note that “sentence” format is *preferred* for Subtitles on Medium.com. So only the first word and formal names are capitalized, and a period (.) is at the end of the Subtitle. You can, of course, do whatever you want since this only a preferred format.

BONUS: Thesaurus

[6] ONELOOK Thesaurus

<https://onelook.com/thesaurus/>

OneLook is not a tool to find a mistake, like those above. But it is valuable in helping you fix your writing to make it better. I consider it the easiest and most useful thesaurus for finding just the right word to make that sentence [perfect](#).

So, those are the tools that I currently use to improve your writing on Medium and elsewhere. I keep them all in a “Tab Group” in my MS Edge browser so they are always available for quick access (other browsers have similar group or container options.)