Digital Writing: Jumpstart Your Revision with Online Editing Tools

Smart Use of Online Editing Tools

What does intelligent and resourceful use of online editing tools mean? First, the realization that online editors are not human editors allows for taking these tools for what they are – writers' means. Online editors, when used smartly, can help us jumpstart our editing and even writing, but they won't miraculously transform ugly paragraphs into well-written ones (yet). Second, distinguishing between different stages of revision and editing is crucial for choosing a suitable app. Finally, understanding what each app is good for helps us use this app efficiently.

The following two sections take into account these considerations and summarize basic information about several tools we can use to edit papers.

Section I - Editing tools for different types of self-editing and writing

Developmental Revision

What the type means	What the app does
Deals with the manuscript's organization and structure; involves creating a vision for the manuscript and rearranging the contents. Ask yourself: What is my vision for the manuscript? Am I organizing my ideas well? Do I distinguish my thesis from my topic?	Using **Scrivener's** *outliner or corkboard* (both are linked to synopsis and notes) enables you to step back and see a larger picture of your work. *Outliner and corkboard* are convenient rearranging tools that help create well-developed and logical outlines. You can download a free trial version of Scrivener without creating an account. **Scrivener** and **OmniOutliner for Mac** can be used for outlining as well as for *reverse outlining* when you self-edit.

Evaluation Revision

What the type means	What the app does
Looks at the overall quality of the manuscripts and deals with the manuscript's structure, flow, and completeness. Ask yourself: Is my text readable immediately throughout? Are my ideas visible to the reader?	Scrivener, OmniOutliner, Scholarcy, AcaWriter, and Research Writing Tutor Although **Scholarcy** is an AI *summarizer*, it can be used to assess the manuscript's completeness when self-editing. Generating summary flashcards, Scholarcy highlights the main elements of your paper, such as study subject(s), methods, results, etc. **AcaWriter** (U of Technology Sydney). For now, the use of AcaWriter is limited to Australia, but there is a freely available demo that will feedback on your Introduction. **Research Writing Tutor** offers discipline-specific feedback and has been used at Iowa State (https://cce.grad-college.iastate.edu/resources/writing-resources

Content Editing

What the type means	What the app does
Editing at the paragraph level ensuring that your paragraphs are cohesive and effective.	Writing evaluation programs **AcaWriter** and **Research Writing Tutor** offer instant feedback on your rhetorical moves - words you used to advance your points. **The Writing Mentor** offers feedback on paragraph development and coherence.

Line Editing

What the type means	What the app does
Substantive editing for style and language use at the sentence level. Ask yourself: Does my draft contain run-on sentences, fragments, redundancies, awkward phrasing, cliches, shifts in tone, etc.?	*The Text Change Calculator* in the **Pacemaker Planner** determines the *degree* of changes you've implemented during editing. For other apps, see Section 2.

Proofreading

What the type means	What the app does
Correction of grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes.	See Section 2.

Section 2: Typical errors and defects vis-à-vis editing apps

Grammerly:

https://www.grammarly.com

Application	Application reports on
• tailors writing suggestions to your goals and audience • generates writing statistics reports • works parallel to other online editors	• mechanics in context (spelling, grammar, and punctuation) • tone (friendly, concerned, angry, etc.) • conciseness (suggests how you can tighten phrases) • clarity (rates clarity) • readability (sentence length and reading time)

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Slick Write:

http://www.slickwrite.com/#!home

Application	Application reports on
• has the word association tool • generates writing statistics reports	grammar and potential stylistic mistakes and defects: • conciseness (adverbs, sentences starting with the same word or words, wordy phrases, excessive prepositional phrases) • passive voice • sentence structure (sentences type; long sentences and sentence fragments) • vocabulary variety

Expresso:

https://www.expresso-app.org

Application	Application reports on
• suggests synonyms • generates writing statistics reports	• overused vague verbs • filler words • nominalizations • pronouns (unclear antecedents) • clustered nouns • passive voice • long sentences, fragments, and clause-heavy sentences • late predicates • predicates detached from subjects

The Hemingway Editor:

https://hemingwayapp.com

Application	Application reports on
• rates readability	• wordy phrases (change "benefit from" to "enjoy") • hard-to-read sentences

Paper Rater:

https://www.paperrater.com

Application	Application reports on
• can be adjusted to educational level and paper type • detects plagiarism • shows your scholarly vocabulary score	• spelling and grammar • trite or inappropriate words and cliches • quality of transitional phrases • sentence length • passive voice • variety in terms of sentence starts

Grammark.org:

grammark.org/#/

Application	Application reports on
• makes (general academic) vocabulary suggestions	• grammar • passive voice • wordiness • nominalizations • sentence-level issues • transitions

Final Thoughts: What to Keep in Mind

- AI tools such as, for example, Grammarly are still learning.

- Most of the time, these apps will identify a problem or an error but they won't fix or correct them. Instead, these apps will offer guidance on how the writer can revise.

- You have to learn to interpret the apps' suggestions based on your knowledge of sentence structure, vocabulary, and other elements.