

A Guide to Grammarly

Grammarly Premium (hereafter Grammarly) is a one-of-a-kind third-party licensed app for writers that uses artificial intelligence to scan a writer's work in real-time. It not only finds spelling, plagiarism, and 400+ grammar mistakes, but it also offers suggestions on how to improve one's writing style while searching for inconsistent spelling, capitalization, and ways of writing dates. It allows users to set the audience (reader's level of expertise), register (informal, neutral, or formal), and type of writing (general, academic, business, general, technical, casual, creative). The settings are one reason Grammarly, with over 30 million daily users, is the leader in its field.

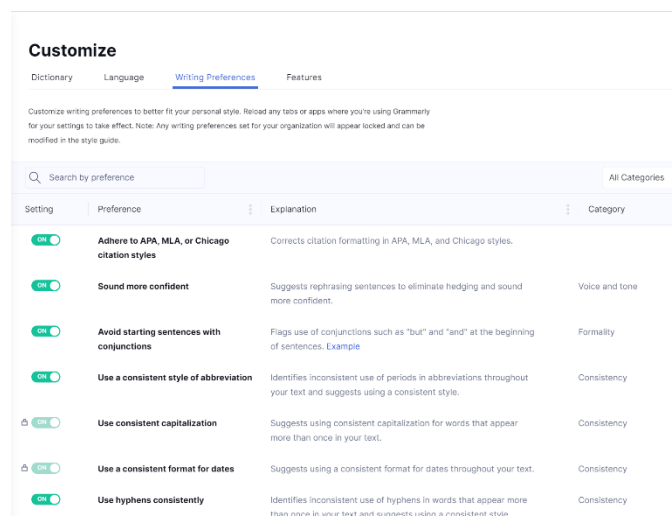
Before using Grammarly Premium, you should be aware of a few strengths and weaknesses of using the writing tool

1. Grammarly has a helpful FAQ page if you have some installation difficulties:

<https://support.grammarly.com/hc/en-us/categories/115000018631-Tips-Tutorials>

2. Grammarly is a valuable tool, but it cannot assist you with the organization of your ideas and paragraphing. Neither can it help you find or narrow your research topic, nor can it evaluate the strength of your thesis statement, introduction, arguments, and conclusion. Mostly, its help with paragraph cohesion is also limited. Its original target audience was business people, so Grammarly does not yet have the capabilities to provide feedback on academic style as it applies to specific fields. Courses taught by instructors in the Language Center (*Sprachenzentrum*) or individual appointments with tutors in the Writing Center (*Schreibzentrum*) at Leuphana can help you with these matters.

3. Grammarly can be added to various programs and devices (e.g., Word or iPad). You'll have to download the appropriate file from the Grammarly website. A Grammarly Icon will appear directly in your document on your desktop computer. If you click on it, it will provide you with the feedback types you've selected. You can also click on the settings button to choose your variant of English (e.g., British or American English) or your writing preferences (see picture to the right).



4. Grammarly allows the user to customize the feedback individually. This should reduce some of the false positives related to register (the degree of formality) and some features of academic writing that may differ from subject to subject. In sustainability studies, for instance, passive voice is more prevalent than in the humanities, so someone from that field could shut off the button "Avoid passive voice." As of May 2023, there are 50+ individual settings that range from adding transitional words to avoiding long, hard-to-read sentences and biased language. This is a vast improvement to earlier versions.

4. Instead of accessing Grammarly directly in your document, you can use it online by clicking on "My Grammarly" after logging into your account. You can click on the icon "New" or "Upload" and either work on a new text in Grammarly on your text or upload an



existing text to Grammarly. Your text will automatically be saved, but you will still need to format the text in a word processing program.

5. These helpful features, however, do not mean that Grammarly is perfect; artificial intelligence is still evolving. For example, Grammarly also does not recognize quotes from literary texts, poetry, or movie scripts in an academic paper. It will most likely provide suggestions for changing them, even though academic writers must do so. Grammarly has many difficulties with the work cited or reference list. It will not know the individual regulations for style sheets (e.g., a book might be underlined or placed in italics depending on the style sheet).

6. Even with these limitations, Grammarly is excellent at helping writers to reduce wordiness, find spelling and comma mistakes, as well as notice grammar errors. Moreover, it may help you reflect on your writing style. I, for example, type very quickly and sometimes leave out the articles “a” and “the.” When proofreading my papers, my brain automatically fills in the gaps, so I don’t notice some instances in which that happens. Grammarly helps me locate those types of mistakes.

7. And a last word of caution. From these examples, it should be clear that for non-native speakers of English with a B1 level of English according to the CEF (The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), Grammarly might do more harm than good. After all, it was created for native speakers. The latest research suggests that non-native speakers of English with a B2 level of English should use Grammarly in conjunction with language instructors who provide independent corrective feedback and respond to questions while using Grammarly. C1/C2 English users should recognize most false positives. However, please be especially careful with using unfamiliar vocabulary words. Cross-reference them with a learner’s dictionary (e.g., <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/?cc=cz>) or a dictionary for native speakers (e.g., <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>).

8. Please help me improve this guide. I would appreciate your comments and welcome screenshots of any aspect of Grammarly or any of the writing tools mentioned above that you find helpful, confusing, or annoying. Please send them in a Word document to writingtools-spz@leuphana.de with the subject line: “Feedback on Grammarly.” A few minutes of your time might save many non-native speakers of English some time and confusion. By sending me your feedback, you agree to its anonymous use.