

# A Guide to Grammarly

by Dr. Sabrina Völz, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg

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 automatically detects the tone of the writing, a feature that can be turned off if one wishes. With over 30 million users, Grammarly is the leader in its field.

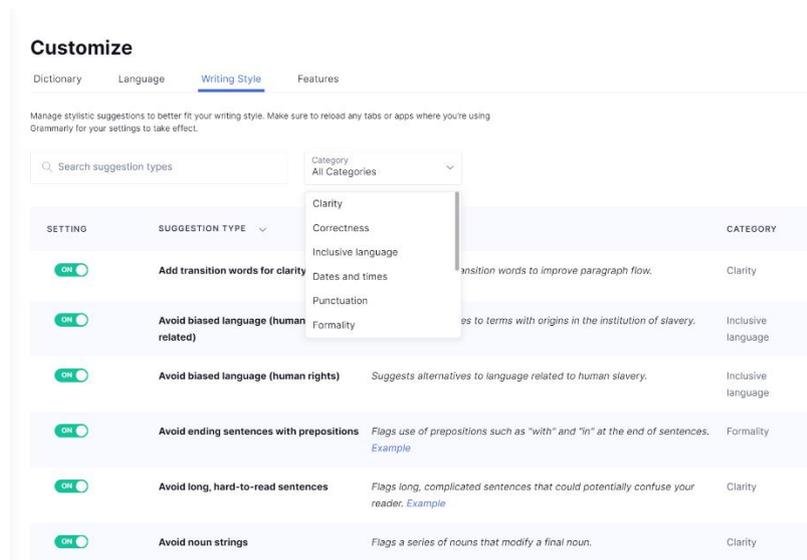
Before using Grammarly Premium, you should be aware of a few strengths and weaknesses of using the writing tool

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 useful tool, but it cannot assist you with the organization of your ideas and paragraphs. 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 on paragraph cohesion is also limited. Grammarly does not yet have the capabilities to provide feedback on matters of citation or 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). Users will have to download the appropriate file from the Grammarly website. A Grammarly Icon will appear directly in your document. If you click on it, it will provide you with the feedback on the types you've selected. You can also click on the settings button to allow you to choose your variant of English (e.g., British or American English) or your writing style (see picture to the below).



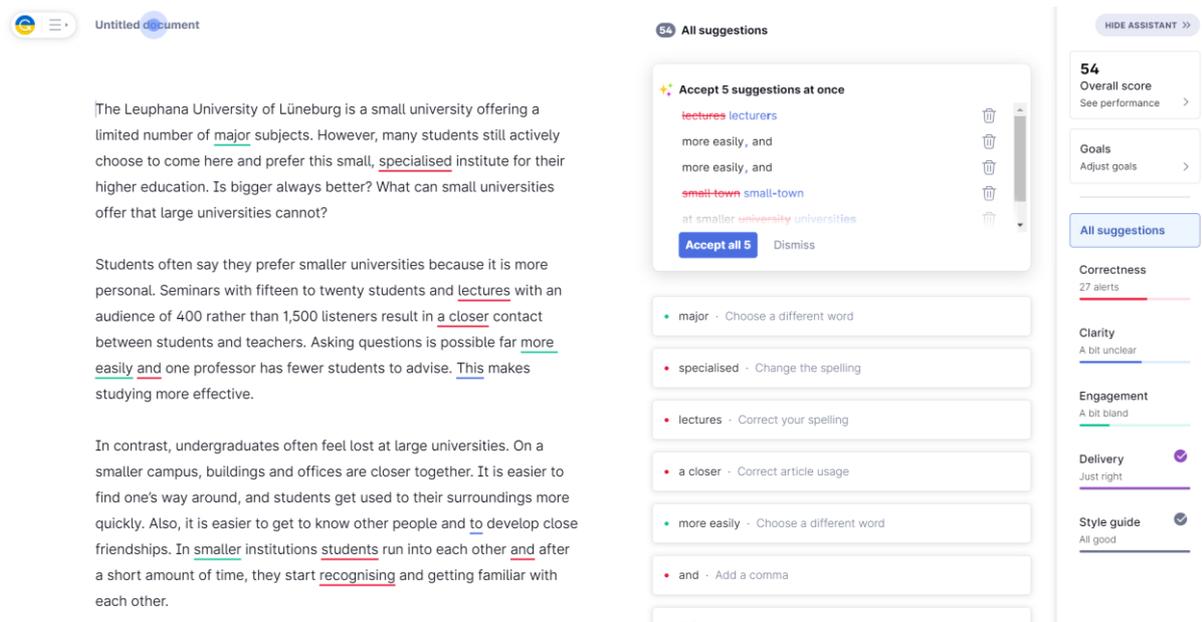
4. Grammarly allows users to customize the feedback they receive. This feature should reduce some of the false positives related to register (the degree of formality) and some features of academic writing that may differ from subject to subject. In sustainability studies, for instance, the passive voice is more prevalent in writing than in the humanities, so someone from that field could shut off the button "Avoid passive voice." There are now 35 individual settings in 6 categories that

range from adding transitional words to avoiding long, hard-to-read sentences. This feature does not mean that Grammarly has thought of everything. In academic writing, one should avoid the direct address "you" in research papers; there is no button to turn on this function. Novice academic writers will have to remember that rule or pay attention to it in the editing process.

4. Instead of accessing Grammarly directly in Word, writers can use it online by clicking on “My Grammarly” after logging into your account in your browser. Then click on the icon “New” or “Upload” and either work on a new text in Grammarly or upload an existing one. The text will automatically be saved, but it will still need to be formatted in a word processing program later.



Working directly on the Grammarly page will look different than using it in a text processing program, but the usage is intuitive:



5. The helpful features mentioned above do not mean that Grammarly is perfect; artificial intelligence is still evolving. In the following sentence, for instance, Grammarly marks “may be” as incorrect – which is not incorrect – and suggests “maybe”:

Therefore, the church is not well equipped to deal with addictive behaviors and **may be** more concerned with weighing the decision whether to report the sexual assault or abuse to outside authorities than with the short- or long-term effects of the abuse on the victim.

Grammarly also does not recognize quotes from literary texts, poetry, or movie scripts in an academic paper. It will assume the register difference (formal to informal tone) is a slip and most likely mark numerous phrases as wrong. These are only two examples, but users will encounter many more. Therefore, accept suggestions with a critical eye and only accept the ones you are sure are correct.

6. And a last word of caution. 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. For those at this level, you may use Grammarly Premium in conjunction with the course “Writing with Style,” which is offered for undergraduate and graduate students. C1/C2 users of English should recognize most of the false positives.

7. 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 to [writingtools-spz@leuphana.de](mailto:writingtools-spz@leuphana.de) with the subject line: “Feedback on Grammarly.” By sending me your feedback, you agree to its anonymous use.