

# Exercises

## Various Tools

We have compiled these exercises and classroom activities to encourage students to become more self-reflective, confident, and critical writers when using grammar- and style-checking tools.

Some exercises have been designed with a specific tool in mind, while others are more generic. Most can be adapted for use with any other writing tool, as long as the two tools fulfil similar functions. Some activities may work better as individual student tasks; others as small group exercises, or even class-wide discussions. Again, feel free to adapt the format to match your needs.

### Testing a grammar checker on common punctuation mistakes (CS, ROS/FS, SF)

individual  group 

Ask your students to test the efficiency and accuracy of the chosen grammar checker by inputting the sentences below which contain common punctuation mistakes, such as run-on (ROS) or fused sentences (FS), sentence fragments (SF), and comma splices (CS).

1. Travel is educational, it broadens your horizons.
2. The current city policy on housing is incomplete as it stands. Which is why we believe the proposed amendments should be passed.
3. There are many reasons to work here, the weather is lovely and the people are friendly.
4. The small, one-page stories are all the same size and style. With no difference except the colour.
5. Tim left his job he could not stand his boss.
6. By paying too much attention to polls can make a political leader unwilling to propose innovative policies.
7. Jarod had an interview with a television company, I might get a job as his assistant.
8. She always recycles her bottles they are collected twice a month.
9. John is always late for work, nobody seems to care.
10. The magazine has a reputation for a sophisticated, prestigious, and elite group of readers. Although that is a value judgment and in circumstances not a true premise.

### Exploring engaging writing with style checkers

individual  group  classroom 

The Writer's Diet, The Hemingway Editor and ProWritingAid can all be used to help students think about audience, readerly engagement, creativity and personal voice in various types of writing.

What makes one text more engaging than another? Does engaging writing necessarily have to be simple and concise? For this discussion, ask students to bring a digital fragment from a favourite piece of fiction or non-fiction to class. Ask them to feed the text through either or all of the above mentioned tools to get some feedback on readability. Compare and discuss the results and their implications.

## Modelling engagement with digital writing tools

group  classroom 

*These suggestions from Michael Milone are presented by Alex Vernon in his article “Computerized Grammar Checkers 2000”:*

- “Model the grammar checker editing process in front of the class via projection, and discuss why the computer flagged items, the teacher’s response to the program’s feedback, and the technical limitations of the program.
- Have groups of two or three students analyse student texts and grammar checker feedback.
- Have students enable only certain checking options to focus on particular kinds of error.”

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## Connecting the grammar checker to instruction

individual  group 

*Activities suggested by Reva Potter & Dorothy Fuller in “My New Teaching Partner? Using the Grammar Checker in Writing Instruction”:*

- “We designed the four-month action research study to include direct instruction of the grammar checker and regular grammar instruction enhanced with use of grammar-check tools. Students first learned about the checker, its components and purposes, before beginning the agreed-on three grammar topics. Once into the units, lessons incorporated grammar check in a number of ways. Students composed or typed essays with the grammar-check tools turned off and on; they wrote sentences to ‘trigger’ grammar-check error identification; they compared terminology and rules of grammar from text resources with those on the computer checker; and they explored the readability statistics, which report sentence length and the grade level of their writing.”
- “A favorite activity for the seventh graders was typing the textbook ‘pretest’ for the subject-verb agreement unit. Students then observed the grammar-check performance, reported their results, and hypothesized why the computer grammar checker may have missed or misdiagnosed an error. [... In] subsequent units students eagerly typed their assigned ‘pretest’ sentences, typed extra if they had time, and began hypothesizing at their individual computers about the accuracy of the grammar checker before the results were reported.”
- “Another engaging use of the grammar check allowed students to personalize their grammar experience by creating original sentence examples to challenge the checker: practicing examples of active or passive voice, creating possible subject-verb agreement problems, and changing simple sentences to compound or complex. Students watched the computer screens as the checker ‘reacted’ to the sentences they created, and they compared and discussed the checker’s recommendations with their classmates.”

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## Checking on the grammar checker

individual  group  classroom 

*Activities recommended by Paul John, Nina Wolla, Mariane Gazaillea, and Walcir Cardoso in “Using grammar checkers to provide written corrective feedback”:*

“... the teacher could prepare a paragraph with 12 errors, making sure that the grammar checker identifies a certain number of them (e.g., 8 errors correctly flagged). The students’ task would then be i) to provide explanations for what is wrong with the 8 identified errors, and ii) to identify the 4 errors that have escaped detection.

A more complex version of the activity could include instances where the grammar checker proposes one or more inaccurate corrections or where it triggers false alarms (correct forms mistakenly flagged as errors). In this case, the students’ task would be to correct the grammar checker’s mistakes. In their case, students would be developing analytic skills that should lead to greater metalinguistic awareness and accuracy.”

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