



tipsheet

September 2007

Beyond "Spell-Check:" Using Microsoft Word's Spelling and Grammar Tools for Editing

Most users of Word know about the basic spelling and grammar check functions. "Spell-check" can be helpful with **proofreading**, the final read-through of a document for mechanical errors. The table below offers quick tips on using this tool effectively and avoiding its most common pitfalls.

Microsoft Word's Basic Spell-check and Grammar Tools:

Most useful for...	Unreliable in cases of...	Can generate errors with...
Basic spelling mistakes	Mistaking one word for another	Proper nouns (names, etc)
Typos	Punctuation and capitalization	Jargon
Simple grammatical errors	Sentences that don't make sense	Certain grammatical issues

What many do *not* know is that Word also offers more advanced functions that writers can customize to aid in the editing process.

Editing differs from proofing because you the writer are more active and engaged in considering your audience, your objective and your context as a writer. Items needing attention as you edit are not necessarily "errors" in an objective sense; rather, they may be instances of inappropriate tone, wordiness, or awkward usage. You may want to polish your prose to make it more graceful.

As with proofreading, you cannot rely on any computer program to edit for you—especially because this process involves personal judgment. However, Word's customizable grammar and style tools may be quite helpful. **To use advanced grammar and style functions in Word 2007**, look to the end of the short row of icons in the top left corner to the right of the Microsoft logo (the Office button) and click on the small down arrow (above "Insert") to bring up a menu called "Customize Quick Access Toolbar."

Microsoft Word's Advanced Spelling, Grammar and Style Tools:

Tool name	"Show Readability Statistics"	"Grammar & Style Settings"
How accessed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Click "More Commands" under the "Customize Quick Access Toolbar." 2. Click "Proofing" from the left-hand side menu. 3. Under the subheading "When Correcting Spelling and Grammar in Word," click the last check-box for "Show Readability Statistics." 4. Click "OK." 5. Once set, note the display of readability statistics at the end of the spelling and grammar check. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Under the "Customize Quick Access Toolbar," choose the "Grammar and Style" setting to "Writing Style." 2. Select the "Grammar and Style" issues you want to check.
What it can check for (partial listing)	Average words per sentence and sentences per paragraph; uses of passive voice; reading grade level and overall reading ease	Use of first person; wordiness; jargon; gender-specific language; clichés; misused words; colloquialism; unclear phrasing; run-on/overly long sentences

After you've selected the issues Word should look for, the program will identify any possible problems along with the normal spelling and grammar check function whenever you run it. Stylistic concerns will even come with suggested alternatives.

Three Final Tips:

- **Customize your "dictionary"** to make spell-check suit your needs.
- **Highlight** the passage you want to check when you don't want to review the whole document.
- **Edit first, proofread second.** That way, you only spend time polishing text that will appear in your final product.

The Consultants in the Cordis Corporation Business Communication Center proudly bring these tips to you. From resumes and cover letters to presentations and PowerPoint slide design, the Cordis Corporation Business Communication Center can help you with all your communication needs. Stop by and visit us in McColl 3127, or visit our [Website](#) for more information.

Cordis Corporation Business Communication Center | McColl 3127 | ☎ 919.843.9843 | <http://public.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/buscommctr/>