

SAVING TIME AND EFFORT: SOFTWARE TOOLS FOR PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY

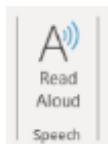
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The Psychology of Workplace Writing

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Professionals who write know it's the little things like hyphens and commas and missing letters that cause the most confusion, embarrassment and sometimes a lawsuit. Sure, everyone reads it through one more time and does a spell check. What else is there? Lots actually!

Here are some mostly free or inexpensive state-of-the-art software tools professionals use to automate the tedious and imperfect process of checking your text to eradicate errors and polish up your text with next to no effort. Plus, a section on using ChatGPT.



Text-to-Speech Readers

When you read your own writing, your eyes tend to see what your brain *thinks* should be there and you can skim right past what turn out to be glaring mistakes. *Listening* to someone read out loud what you wrote while you follow

along with your eyes is like standing in the shoes of the reader. If there is a word wrong or a spelling or grammar error, you are going to hear it when you would not see it. You also hear the rhythm of cadence of your word they way they will sound in the reader's head.

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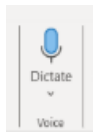


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SOFTWARE TOOLS FOR PRODUCTIVITY

MS Word 10 has an inbuilt text-to-speech reader you can activate with by clicking Read Aloud on the Review ribbon. If you are working on an Android device, try @Voice Aloud Reader. There are dozens of other text-to-speech readers on the market. Just do a search for 'text to speech readers' and try them out.

MS Word Dictate



MS Word also has a speech to text function. You will find the dictate icon on the right side of the Home ribbon. Click on the icon and start talking. It's great for thinking out loud and for transposing text from sources that you cannot copy and paste. It also has punctuation and editing commands. For example, you can say comma, new line and delete, plus 14 other commands.

It is surprisingly good with a fairly wide range of accents as long as you clearly articulate your words. In terms of saving time, it's the difference between doing your laundry in the bathtub and using an LG 5.8 cu.ft. Mega Capacity Washer with fuzzy logic, remote start and Wi-Fi connectivity,

PerfectIt from Intelligent Editing



If the 'devil is in the details', PerfectIt is The Exorcist. PerfectIt is like having your own personal proofreader on call 24/7. It picks up all the little inconsistencies in hyphenation, bullet point and list punctuation, spelling (program here, programme there), flags all your abbreviations, looks for missing quotation marks and brackets, checks for consistent use of capitals in the text and in headings, and 32 other checks it would take you hours to find manually and still miss a few. You can download a free, easy-to-install, full-feature

14-day trial at this link:

<http://www.intelligentediting.com/>
No credit card information required.

WordRake



WordRake will 'declutter' your text in no time flat. It takes only a minute to process 240,000 English words and all their

permutations and flags all those 'unnecessary words' you hear writing gurus talk about. Then you go through the text and click 'accept' or 'reject'. This is what people mean when they talk about 'polishing' your writing. Here is a sample:

*There was nothing that was found **Nothing was found during** in the course of **this investigation that gave rise to caused any concern about her eligibility.***

Try the full-feature 7-day free trial here: <https://www.wordrake.com/> No credit card information required.

StyleWriter



[StyleWriter](#) is a complete manuscript editor that plugs directly into all versions of Microsoft Word and runs on your computer

so you don't need an Internet connection. StyleWriter hunts for common and not-so-common writing errors, jargon, wordy phrases, passive verbs, long sentences and more. It's not uncommon for users to cut up to 25% of the words from their draft, which is what gives your writing that magic sense of flow. It also has its own readability tool called the Bog Index that measures how likely it is your readers will get 'bogged down' in wordy text. I find the Bog Index more useful than other readability measures for technical writing. StyleWriter comes in US, UK and Australian versions and you can customize it for writing style and audience. StyleWriter offers a 14-day free trial at <http://www.stylewriter-usa.com/stylewriter->



[free-download.php](#) No credit card information required.

Grammar Checkers

The problem most people have with grammar checkers is you have to be a grammar geek to understand the message. Here is what I do when I get a message I don't understand:

- Ignore the message. You will be OK more than 50 percent of the time.
- Ask Google. Everything you need to know about grammar is on the Internet.
- Ask a friend or someone at work.

Grammarly



Grammarly is probably the most widely known grammar checker and it has gotten much smarter over the years. The free version offers:

- 150 critical grammar and spelling checks
- 100+ additional advanced grammar and spelling checks
- Vocabulary enhancement suggestions (Suggesting a better word)

The premium version offers additional features, but you probably don't need them to start with. I reject many of the 'errors' Grammarly flags, but every now and then it catches something I missed so it's worth the few minutes it takes to check.

Other programs worth a free trial:

- CorrectEnglish Complete
- Ginger
- SpellCheckPlus Pro
- WhiteSmoke

ChatGPT

There has been an ongoing debate about ChatGPT since it was launched in 2020.

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Ignore that and start playing with it because it can save you hours of time. I have been using it seriously for about a year now. The most important thing is learning how to give it the right prompts (instructions). If the first prompt doesn't give you what you want, rephrase, refine or change the prompt. The more clearly you can formulate the task, the more useful the response. Kind of like talking to researchers.

In the last month, here are a few of the ways I have used ChatGPT.

- Summarize the following points by topic.
- Summarize this section.
- Rewrite the following text in the Plain English style.
- Write an MS Word wildcard string to find constructions like "the [any word] of the [any word]". For example, "the assessment of the funding" and "the establishment of [any word]". I had to rephrase the prompt several times, but I got what I needed in less than twenty minutes: the [!]{1,} of the [!]{1,}
- What would be the benefits of integrating religious councils into development projects?
- Format these references in the style of the examples given.
- Respond to my opinion that the following text objectifies the participants and robs them of their agency. Do you agree or disagree?
- What's the difference between 'further' and 'furthermore'?
- Create an outline based on the topic sentence of the following paragraphs.

And my favorite: Write a haiku poem for this journal abstract.

Abstract: Water Stress: Opportunities for supply chain research

Driven by climate change and overuse, water stress is a worsening sustainability concern that threatens businesses and communities across the globe. Leading global organizations such as the United Nations have expressed an urgent need for sustainable water



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management strategies across nations and economies. Yet, the field of supply chain management does not have a substantial research stream related to water. A key challenge is the lack of a persuasive organizing framework within this setting. This study presents a systematic literature review of water stress from a supply chain perspective. Literature spanning over two decades across an array of journals is synthesized into an overarching framework that organizes topics related to water. Challenges firms face due to operational and contextual water risks are presented. Based on the proposed framework, research gaps for further exploration of the relationship between supply chains and water stress are suggested.

The haiku abstract

Climate whispers change,
Supply chains thirst for wisdom,
In crisis, solutions sought.

If you would like to learn more about using ChatGPT, contact me and I would be happy share what I have learned so far.

QUESTIONS?



Please feel welcome to contact me if you have any questions about these or other programs, tips, tricks and techniques for correcting, cleaning up and polishing your writing. You can email me at clayton@redplough.com

GET MORE FREE RESOURCES

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