

Nine Reasons to Pay A Pro Editor to Review Documents for Publication

A pro editor can make and suggest revisions more comprehensively, more constructively, and more contextually appropriate than software tools supplemented by a friend or colleague.

Part 1: Five Ways Your Computer Fails You

The five statements that follow point out how spell-check, grammar-check, and style-check tools fail to catch some errors in spelling, grammar, and style. It is possible that the word-processing program you use catches one or more of the errors mentioned here. Even so, the five statements and examples given reveal how software developers cannot replace the expertise of a pro editor. That expertise has been crucial to innumerable writers to ensure that their writing fulfils its potential. Review these and decide whether your writing should proceed toward publication without the input of a professional editor.

1. 1. Spell-check does not recognize the parts of speech.
 - • *Practice* and *advice* are nouns. *Practise* and *advise* are verbs.
 - • *Center* can be a noun or a verb. *Centre* is only a noun.

All four words are correctly spelled and pass through spell-check. Yet, spell-check cannot tell you when a word is the wrong part of speech for a particular sentence.

1. 2. Grammar-check always discourages the passive voice, though it exists for a reason.
 - • *Passive: The papers were shipped by courier yesterday at five o'clock.*
 - • *Active: I shipped the papers by courier yesterday at five o'clock*

The sentence with the passive verb emphasizes the papers being shipped. The sentence with the active verb emphasizes the speaker's responsibility for the shipping. One could be better than the other for your particular context. By always discouraging the passive option, grammar-check does not support an informed choice.

1. 3. Style-check cannot help you with the logic of your sentences.
 - • *Everywhere we looked, there were happy people - even where we couldn't see them.*
 - • *This sandwich is big, and Tina is small, so we should leave now.*

Style-check passes over some sentences flawed in ways that make readers stumble, including sentences with logical flaws, as in these examples.

1. 4. Grammar-check cannot help you with some examples of subject-verb agreement.
 - *None of those shovels is mine.*

- *Her family has always been supportive.*

None is a contraction of *not* and *one*. When *none* is the subject of a sentence or clause, use singular verbs, as with *one*. Similarly, *family*, like *crowd* and other collective nouns, is singular and goes with singular verbs.

1. 5. Spell-check cannot tell you when you use the wrong word.
 - *Lisa drove the car right into the post.*
 - *Lisa drove the car right into the past.*

If you intend to type *post*, but enter *past*, your computer won't notice the error. *Till* (turning soil) and *til* (from *until*) also slip past spell-check when misused. These are but two examples of many contextually-wrong words that could go before your readers after passing through spell-check, grammar-check and/or style-check tools.

Part 2: Four Ways Friends and Colleagues Can Lead You Astray

The four statements that follow show how editorial review by friends and colleagues generally involves risk to the success of any document. Though a friend, family member, colleague, or other person might provide immensely helpful input toward the success of a document, it also happens that such people become unhelpful meddlers despite the best intentions or qualifications. Even if you consider yourself able to avoid these pitfalls, it is suggested that you never regard the editorial input of a friend or colleague as eliminating the necessity of a professional editor.

1. 6. Many editors edit simply to please themselves.
 - Friends and colleagues playing the role of editor typically differ from the writer regarding grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, style, or level of detail. This often results in their attempting to correct the document by revising it to their own standards, which might not be correct, consistent, or better than the writer's standards.
1. 7. Friends and colleagues are often not sure how to improve a document for its intended readers.
 - The value of an editor comes from improving the reader's experience of the writer's work. This requires the editor to know who the target readers are, what they expect, and how to fulfil those expectations. Thus, a book on photography for children, for example, might benefit from a photographer's input on technical matters only.
1. 8. Subject-matter experts can help you to get facts right but can obstruct your success in other ways.
 - Colleagues (even subordinates) may bring their own agenda to an editorial review. This can include their meddling in the facts and inserting their own voices as if co-authors. This can lead to the document becoming a distorted patchwork of facts that's less credible to your readers. Fixing this could take a lot of time and effort, then leave you needing a good editor again.

1. 9. Friends and colleagues often introduce distortions when intending to improve a document.

- Regardless of what qualifies a friend or colleague to edit a document, it is common for the editorial role to bring out unhelpful co-authorship. For example, if he or she considers the two topics inseparably linked, the editor might consider it necessary to include discussion of topic Y because the document mentions topic X. Though there could be merit in this, it might take the document beyond the interest or beyond the comprehension of the intended readers. Otherwise, it could make the document too lengthy or out-of-focus.

What you can do.

First, focus on getting the contents of your document as correct and complete as you reasonably can. Then, pay a pro editor for thorough editing. A professional editor can make and suggest revisions more comprehensively, more constructively, and more contextually appropriate than software tools supplemented by a friend or colleague. Once you have integrated the editor's input, then pay for professional proofing.

- Glenn R Harrington

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