

Seven of the Best Free and Low-Cost Writing Tools

Great content is well-written content. You have only a few seconds to grab your reader's attention. That is not easy.

Fortunately, several free and low-cost tools can help you write clear, coherent and compelling content. Here are some of my favorites.

Grammarly

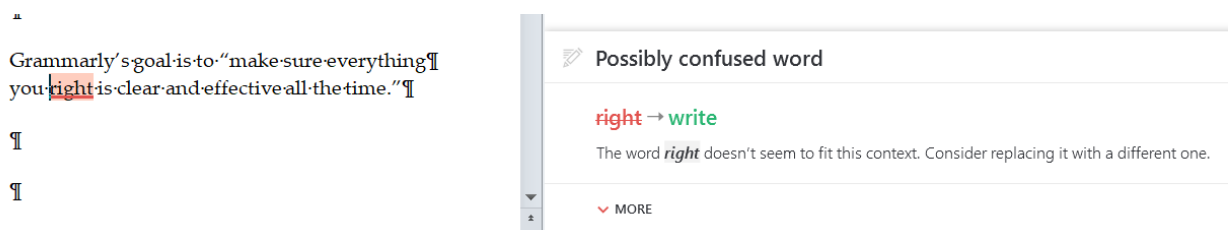
<https://www.grammarly.com>

Grammarly's goal is to "make sure everything you write is clear and effective all the time." This online tool checks for grammar, spelling, passive voice, and the like. It gives you a rating so you can get a sense of how you're doing.

Better Writing, Better Grades

Easy, accurate proofreading and editing wherever you write.

Here is a sample of a Grammarly edit. The tool lets you "step" through the options, and accept or ignore its suggestions.



I use this tool to review polished drafts, when I've become too familiar with the material to look at it objectively.

The free version checks for "critical" grammar and spelling errors. The premium version, which has much more functionality, costs as little as \$12 a month.

In addition to the online text editor, Grammarly offers a free browser extension, which corrects critical writing errors. The extension is available for Chrome, Safari, Edge and Firefox.

[Hemingway App](http://www.hemingwayapp.com) www.hemingwayapp.com

This tool helps you create and edit content. The Hemingway app tracks:

- Readability
- Passive voice
- Excessive use of adverbs
- Complicated structures
- Grammatical errors
- And hard-to read-sentences.

The tool highlights the words and sentences it wants you to correct.

Hemingway App makes your writing bold and clear.

The app highlights lengthy, complex sentences and common errors; if you see a yellow sentence, shorten or split it. If you see a red highlight, your sentence is so dense and complicated that your readers will get lost trying to follow its meandering, splitting logic — try editing this sentence to remove the red.

You can utilize a shorter word in place of a purple one. Mouse over them for hints.

Adverbs and weakening phrases are helpfully shown in blue. Get rid of them and pick words with force, perhaps.

Phrases in green have been marked to show passive voice.

You can format your text with the toolbar.

Paste in something you're working on and edit away. Or, click the Write button and compose something new.

Hemingway Editor

Readability

Grade 6
Good

Words: 133
Show More ▾

- 2 adverbs, meeting the goal of 2 or fewer.
- 1 use of passive voice, meeting the goal of 2 or fewer.
- 1 phrase has a simpler alternative.
- 1 of 11 sentences is hard to read.
- 1 of 11 sentences is very hard to read.

I like the fact that the Hemingway app provides so much feedback so quickly. I read through the summary on the right, and cross-check the items that need attention.

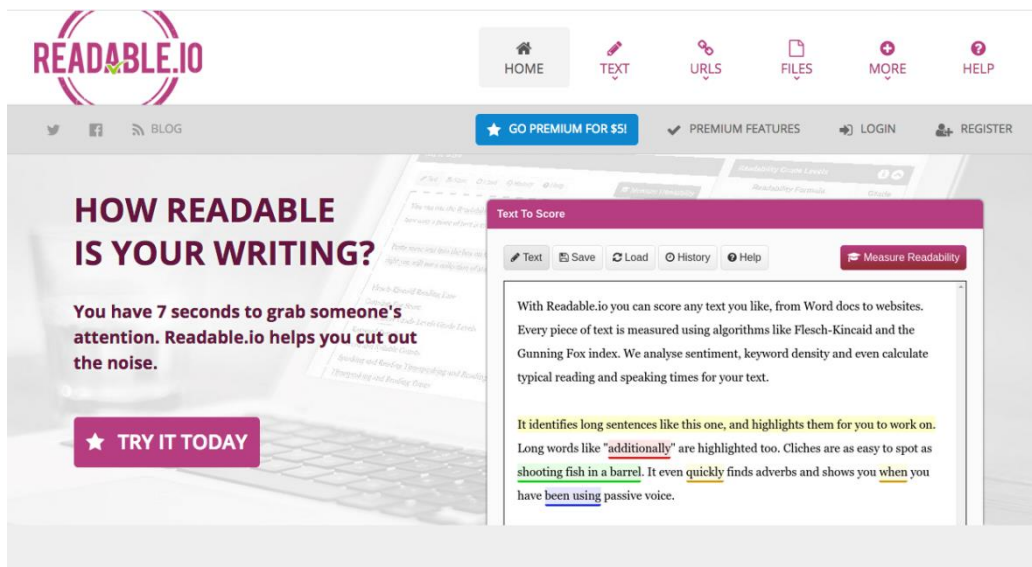
The online version of this tool is free. The desktop version (as of this writing) is under \$20, with free upgrades.

[Readable](http://www.readable.io)

www.readable.io

This tool measures the readability of content using respected algorithms like the [Flesch-Kincaid readability test](#), which grades how understandable your content is, and gives it a score between one and 100. A conversion table interprets this score and correlates it to a grade level, which suggests the lowest level of education needed for someone to easily understand the material. Then the tool suggests ways you can improve the content.

A high score means the content is very readable, which usually correlates to a lower level. For example, a score of 70 to 80 is equivalent to about a 7th grade reading level. In general, the goal is to write comfortably below the grade level of your intended audience.



The screenshot displays the Readable.io website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for HOME, TEXT, URLS, FILES, MORE, and HELP. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with a 'GO PREMIUM FOR \$5!' button, 'PREMIUM FEATURES', 'LOGIN', and 'REGISTER' options. The main content area features a large heading 'HOW READABLE IS YOUR WRITING?' and a sub-heading 'You have 7 seconds to grab someone's attention. Readable.io helps you cut out the noise.' A prominent 'TRY IT TODAY' button is visible. On the right side, there is a 'Text To Score' tool interface with a 'Measure Readability' button. The tool's output shows a sample text with feedback: 'With Readable.io you can score any text you like, from Word docs to websites. Every piece of text is measured using algorithms like Flesch-Kincaid and the Gunning Fox index. We analyse sentiment, keyword density and even calculate typical reading and speaking times for your text.' Below this, it highlights a long sentence and notes: 'It identifies long sentences like this one, and highlights them for you to work on. Long words like "additionally" are highlighted too. Cliches are as easy to spot as shooting fish in a barrel. It even quickly finds adverbs and shows you when you have been using passive voice.'

Here is Readable's feedback from an earlier draft of this post. I got a good grade. However, the system suggested I replace some long words with shorter ones.

Home / Tools / Measure Text Readability

Editing Save Load

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Get ReadablePro!

ReadablePro subscribers get access to a whole host of specialist readability tools, including unlimited text and URL scoring, files, and more from just \$4 per month!

★ Go Pro Today

This tool is free for occasional use. You have 5:48 left of free usage today.

Readability Quality Statistics Bonus

Readability Rating

A

⚠ You are using too many long words. Try replacing some of them with shorter alternatives.

Download Results: PDF CSV

The service offers a free trial. After that, prices range from about \$4 to \$70 a month, depending on the number of features and logins.

Readability Index

Another way to test the readability of your content is through the readability index option in Microsoft Word. I used it on an earlier draft of this blog post and got this report:

Readability Statistics	
Counts	
Words	1042
Characters	5242
Paragraphs	49
Sentences	66
Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	2.0
Words per Sentence	14.2
Characters per Word	4.7
Readability	
Passive Sentences	3%
Flesch Reading Ease	62.5
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	8.0

OK

Here are guidelines to translate some of these numbers into valuable advice.

- **Total number of words:** Divide this number by 200 to get the number of minutes it will take to read the material.
- **Sentences per paragraph:** Aim for three sentences per paragraph for both print and online.
- **Words per sentence:** Make your sentences as short as possible (and reasonable), for greater comprehension.
- **Flesch reading ease:** Target a score of 50 or higher.
- **Flesch-Kincaid grade level:** Target about four years under the typical education level of your audience.

[Learn how to activate the readability index here.](#)

Once you have activated the readability index, the statistics will automatically appear after you've run spell checker in Word.

[CoSchedule Headline Analyzer](http://www.coschedule.com/headline-analyzer)
www.coschedule.com/headline-analyzer

I am surprised at how many people slave over their content, and then quickly dash off a headline. With only a few seconds to get someone's attention, it's essential the headline "sings."

Fortunately, CoSchedule Headline Analyzer shows you which headlines are more likely to drive traffic, leads and sales. This online tool looks at factors like your headline's word balance, length, the first and last three words, and overall sentiment. It also gives you a preview of how the headline would look in a Google search so you can see how your content will appear to readers.



I tried it on an earlier version of the title of this blog post: “Free and Low-cost Writing and Editing Tools.” My score was disappointing.

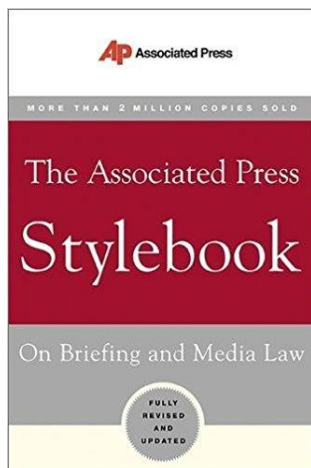
Free And Low Cost Writing Tools



△ *Headline Type:* **Generic**

By trial and error, I added the words “seven” and “best” to create the title “Seven of the Best Free and Low-Cost Writing Tools.” My score went up 16 points, to 75.

[The Associated Press Stylebook](#)



This comprehensive reference manual will help you master grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, edit with clarity and professionalism.

It is available at Amazon and other booksellers in both hardcopy and digital form.

[ToTheWeb SERP \(Search Engine Results Page\) Test Page](https://totheweb.com/learning_center/tool-test-google-title-meta-description-lengths/)

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If you don't write content for websites, you can skip this section.

Technically this isn't a writing tool, although it does impact writing page titles and meta descriptions. These are important for search engine optimization (SEO) because they help determine which information the search engine will display in response to a search inquiry.

The challenge is that Google measures pages titles and meta descriptions by pixels, not by characters, making it more difficult to know how much of your content will be displayed.

This tool simplifies that process. Write or paste the draft into the form, and it automatically calculates the number of pixels and shows what information would be displayed.

Use this free Google SERP snippet optimization tool as a guide when creating your Title and Meta descriptions.

Get Creative – the page title that appears in search engines is like an advertisement for the page.


OPTION 1 **Generate a Preview of your Current Page:**

Enter Page URL

OPTION 2 **Test Your Proposed Title and Meta Description (Updated Dec 2017)**

Page Title

Titles truncated after approx. 580 pixels
0 pixels of 580 pixels

 PDF Title

Titles truncated after approx. 560 pixels
0 pixels of 560 pixels

Meta Description

Descriptions often truncated after 1840 pixels
0 pixels of 1840 pixels

I encourage you to test out these tools and see what works the best for you. You'll get more readers, and they will thank you.

I also encourage you to check out the other content in this blog and sign up to be [notified about new articles](#) on writing, content marketing and related topics. (The sign-up form is at the bottom of the page.)

About the Author



Kay Paumier works with B2B companies to get the word out and get the leads in through content marketing, public relations and other marketing services. She has a long track record of helping companies be more successful by increasing awareness of their products and services. Her clients praise her ability to grasp the big picture, deal with the details, and do everything in between. More information is available at www.communicationsplus.net/about.

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