

Writer's Workbench Analysis Programs Quick Guide


Writer's Workbench provides 25 Analyses that guide writers as they write and revise from within Microsoft Word. Writer's Workbench provides immediate and unbiased feedback for all writers moderately proficient with Word. These analyses, which address increasingly more specific issues within an essay, are grouped into SIX categories: Content, Characteristics, Verbs, Clarity, Words, and Punctuation.

ATTENTION--- All analyses provide more instruction and examples when the user clicks on the  button on the Writer's Workbench Analysis Toolbar.

This guide was created to provide an overview of Writer's Workbench Analyses.

1.1 Content – Organization and Development

These two analyses are specifically designed for expository and argumentative/persuasive essays. They may be less appropriate for narrative or journalistic writing. These programs ignore paragraphs with fewer than 22 words.

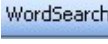

- a. **ORGANIZATION** prints the first and last sentences of each paragraph. When the user clicks on , the program provides writing suggestions for those sentences.
- b. **DEVELOPMENT** identifies those paragraphs that need more development by predetermined word count. Development alerts the writer to "Check for Development" if the paragraphs do not meet the following standards.
 - Introductory paragraph: 85 words (Considerably less than 120 words)
 - Body paragraphs: 125 words (Considerably less than 180 words)
 - Concluding paragraph: 70 words (Considerably less than 100 words)

1.2 Content - Diversity of Content Vocabulary

DIVERSITY OF CONTENT VOCABULARY counts content words and, by predetermined percentages, calculates a diversity ratio.


- A diversity ratio above 59% indicates that the content of the composition does not seem to center on a subject that is adequately developed with clearly identified paragraph topics.
- A diversity ratio between 30% and 59% indicates that the composition is probably adequately focused on a subject with clearly developed paragraph topics.
- A diversity ratio below 30% indicates that the composition seems to need more specific and concrete language or perhaps indicates that the subject is too narrow.

In all cases, a list and count of content words is printed below the general explanation of the analysis; and the writer is directed to make sure that the most commonly used words (listed in the first 3 or 4 lines of the analysis) identify the subject and paragraph topics of the composition.

(By highlighting a word in the list and clicking  on the Writer's Workbench Analysis Toolbar and  on the Writers Workbench Document Toolbar, a writer can locate, in his or her composition, any word listed in the analysis.)

1.3 Content - Vague and Abstract Vocabulary

- a. **VAGUE VOCABULARY** calculates the percentage of vague words and, if the vague ratio is greater than 3%, lists those words and the number of times they were used in the composition.
- b. **ABSTRACT VOCABULARY** calculates the percentage of abstract words and, if the abstract ratio is greater than 2%, lists those words and the number of times they were used in the composition.

In both cases, a list of the words that Writer's Workbench considers vague or abstract is available by the user's clicking on the  button, then, double-clicking on "Writer's Workbench Word Lists" and clicking on "List of Vague Words and Phrases" and clicking on "List of Abstract Words."

2.1 Characteristics – Style Statistics

STYLE STATISTICS provides, in tabular format, information about the document's sentences (length and types), verbs (to be, passives, nominalizations), sentence beginnings (subject openers, non-subject openers), other information (number of words and reading level scores – Kincaid, Coleman-Liau, and Flesch).

2.2 Characteristics - Style Statistics with Support

STYLE STATISTICS WITH SUPPORT offers all of the information provided by **STYLE STATISTICS** along with evaluation statements on the document's scores on sentences (length, types, and beginnings) and on verb choices ("to be" verbs, passives, and nominalizations). Sentences of over 50 words are listed as are sentences that include passive verbs and sentences that include nominalizations.

3.1 Verbs – To Be

The **TO BE** analysis prints the entire document with the sentences separated by blank lines and identifies the **to be** verbs by printing them in **BOLD UPPERCASE LETTERS**. By highlighting a word in the list of sentences and clicking "Word Search" in the Analysis toolbar and, then, if necessary, clicking "FindNext" in the Document toolbar, a writer can easily locate the listed word in his or her composition.

3.2 Verbs – Helping Verbs

HELPING VERBS prints sentences that include the following "helping verb" problems.

<Helper?> flags "**been, done, gone, seen**" when the verb is not preceded by the "**has, have, or had.**"

<Delete helping verb> flags "**went**" when it is accompanied by a helping verb.

<am?is?are?Helper?> flags "**be**" to alert the writer to change the verb or to use an appropriate helping verb.

<of have> flags phrases in which "have" should replace the word "of."

3.3 Verbs - Modals

MODALS prints sentences that include either or both of two modal errors commonly made by ESL students. "Should studies" or "should studying," would be flagged "should **<use base word>** studies" or "should **<use base word>** study". "Might can" would be flagged "**<might be able to>** might can."

4.1 Clarity – This These Those

THIS THESE THOSE prints sentences that includes those words, and the analysis alerts the writer that he or she should always use a noun or noun phrase following those words. Each word is replaced with its counterpart **this⇒** or **these⇒** or **those⇒** so that the writer can verify that he or she has used a noun or noun phrase after the word.

4.2 Clarity - Self and Personal Pronouns

SELF PRONOUNS prints sentences that include –self pronouns with the –self pronouns flagged in **BLUE** boldface capital letters. The –self pronouns are flagged so that the writer can check to see whether or not the –self pronoun should be replaced with a personal pronoun.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS prints sentences that include first, second, and third person pronouns with those pronouns flagged in **BLUE** boldface capital letters. The first person pronouns (I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours) are flagged to encourage the writer to determine whether or not first person is appropriate for the assignment. They are appropriate if the assignment is centered on personal experiences or personal views. The second person pronouns (you, your, yours) are flagged to encourage the writer to revise to eliminate these pronouns unless the composition is made up of instructions or directions. The third person pronouns (he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its, they, them, their, theirs) are flagged to help the reader check for their clear reference to and for their agreement with their antecedents. All of these flagged pronouns, also, enable the writer to check for shifts of person in the composition.

4.3 Clarity – Singular Indefinite Pronouns

SINGULAR INDEFINITE PRONOUNS prints those sentences that include singular indefinite pronouns.

This analysis prints the singular indefinite pronouns in **BLUE** boldface capitals. It identifies indefinite pronouns (any, every, one, somebody, anybody, everybody, no one, someone, anyone, everyone, nobody, something, anything, everything, none, each, another, either, neither) to alert the writer that all verbs and pronouns that relate to these indefinite pronouns must be SINGULAR.

4.4 Clarity - Plural Pronoun Reference

PLURAL PRONOUN REFERENCE prints sentences that include third person plural pronouns.

The **SorP?** precedes three plural personal pronouns (**they, them, or their**) so that the writer can check to see that these pronouns refer to plural nouns.

4.4 Clarity – Adjective Clauses

ADJECTIVE CLAUSES prints sentences that include words that may be used as relative pronouns.

This analysis prints the ⇐ symbol just before a word that may be a relative pronoun. (**who, which, whose, whom, where, that**). The writer is instructed to verify that the word is used as a relative pronoun (the first word in an adjective clause) and, if it is the first word in an adjective clause, that the adjective clause immediately follows the noun to which the relative pronoun refers.

4.6 Clarity - Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS prints sentences that include “-ing” words that are not a part of a verb phrase.

The ⇐?Adjective?⇒ marks “-ing” words and phrases that are serving as nouns or as adjectives. The writer is led to position an –ing adjective word or phrase immediately before or after the noun that it modifies.


4.7 Clarity - Parallelism

PARALLELISM prints sentences that include one or more of four coordinate conjunctions.

The <Parallel?>**BOLD** words identify four words that are always coordinate conjunctions: **and, or, nor, but**. The writer is directed to verify that he or she has used words, phrases, or clauses with the same structure within the pair or series.


5.1 Words - Diction Alerts

DICTION ALERTS lists potentially problematic words and phrases that may lead to wordiness or may be clichés and lists suggestions that will help the writer edit his or her composition where necessary.

The  program provides supplemental information with correct usage of over 800 of the most commonly misused words and phrases in the English language.


5.2 Words - Words to Check

WORDS TO CHECK lists commonly misused and troublesome word pairs that appear in the composition followed by verification alternatives that are frequently confused with the material that the writer has used.

The  program provides supplemental information with correct usage of over 800 of the most commonly misused words and phrases in the English language.

5.3 Words – Negative Words

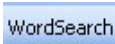
NEGATIVE WORDS calculates the percentage of negative words used in the composition. If that percentage is over 2%, the analysis prints an alphabetically sorted list of negative words used in the document and the number of times each negative word is used. A list of negative words flagged by this

analysis can be found by clicking on the  button, then, double-clicking on “Writer’s Workbench Word Lists,” then on “List of Negative Words.”

“MoreInfo” provides strategic guidance on how to limit negative words to yield a more positive composition.


5.4 Words – Split Infinitives and Article Errors

SPLIT INFINITIVES AND ARTICLE ERRORS flags two points of grammar: split infinitives that may need revisions and incorrect use of articles that should be corrected. “Flagging” consists of listing errors below the explanation.

- a. Instruction on proper handling of each error is provided.
- b. As with all analyses, the writer is instructed to edit the error in his or her document.
- c. As with all analyses, the writer may highlight a word or phrase in the errors and click  to locate the listed word in his or her composition.

5.5 Words - Transitions

TRANSITIONS lists sentences with probable transitional words, phrases, and clauses.

- Use of transitional words, phrases, and clauses is very important in college entrance exams.
- Possible transitional word types are suggested along with the benefits of their use.
- Transitional words and phrases can be found by clicking on the  button, then, double-click "Writer's Workbench Word Lists," then click "List of Transitional Words and Phrases."

6.1 Punctuation - Introductory Elements

PUNCTUATION-INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS prints sentences that probably include an introductory element. The analysis flags, in **BOLD UPPERCASE** letters, the first word in a sentence that begins with a word that is probably an introductory word or that could mark an introductory phrase or clause.

The writer is directed to ensure that the introductory material is followed by a comma.

6.2 Punctuation - Pairs and Series

PUNCTUATION-PAIRS AND SERIES, like the **PARALLELISM** analysis, prints sentences that include the four words that are always coordinate conjunctions, **and**, **or**, **nor**, **but**, and flags them with **<Pair or Series?>BOLD**.

Instruction relevant to punctuation of pairs and series is provided.

6.3 Punctuation – Comma, Semicolon, Colon

PUNCTUATION – COMMA, SEMICOLON, COLON prints sentences that include one or more commas, semicolons, or colons. Each of those points of punctuation is flagged with **[Rule?]** to encourage the writer to justify the punctuation or to delete it and to consider other punctuation that may be needed in the sentence.

6.4 Punctuation - Possible Fragments and Long Sentences

PUNCTUATION – POSSIBLE FRAGMENTS AND LONG SENTENCES lists groups of words that may be sentence fragments or that may be run-on sentences or that may not be punctuated correctly.

- Writers should read these groups of words to determine if they are, in fact, sentences.
- Possible punctuation errors resulting from the creation of long sentences are explained.
- General revision suggestions are provided.

6.5 Punctuation - Unbalanced or Misplaced Punctuation and Capitalization

UNBALANCED OR MISPLACED PUNCTUATION looks for single quotes, double quotes, apostrophes, and left and right parentheses and prints the number of times each of those punctuation elements is used in the document. It directs the writer to find any unbalanced or misplaced punctuation.

It, then, provides a list of sentences that do not begin with capital letters and/or sentences in which the punctuation is positioned incorrectly with quotation marks. Each is followed by a revision suggestion.

CAPITALIZATION lists words that are capitalized inconsistently in the document. It looks for words that have two or more consecutive capital letters and, then, looks for and prints out other words where those words are not capitalized consistently.

As in all analyses, the writer must decide whether or not to make revisions.

WRITING ASSESSMENT SCORES

This sophisticated module provides 22 statistics from other WWB analyses; if the statistic does not achieve an acceptable threshold, the module suggests revision strategies that will guide the writer to improve his or her composition. With administrative permissions, users, teachers, or technicians can adjust thresholds and corresponding suggestions for different grade levels or assignments.

Assessment statistics from this module can be recorded to a text file so that teachers or administrators can track students' writing improvement using Excel or a database program.

Diane Tinucci of Lafayette High School, Wildwood, MO, contributed the idea for the content and the formatting in this "Quick Guide." The Editor-In-Chief for this complete manual is Mariestelle Brown of North Iowa Area Community College, Mason City, IA.