

6 Things Human Editors Do That AI Can't

[AI is a hot topic of discussion in the news](#) these days, and writing and content creation are at the center of some of the biggest stories ([ChatGPT](#)). Until recently, I hadn't really thought of writing help companies like [Grammarly](#) as AI because I've got an old-fashioned mental picture of AI as humanoid robots and talking computers like HAL in *2001*. But AI is exactly what digital writing tools are: computer programs designed to mimic human writing.

[Grammarly](#), a tiered, subscription-based, AI writing assistance tool, can help writers with basics like spelling and grammar and higher-level needs like plagiarism detection, clarity, and tone and formality checkers in paid versions. Grammarly has a huge internet presence (so many [YouTube](#) ads!), and until recently I did not realize how many similar and varying competitors it has, such as [ProWritingAid](#), [Ginger](#), [Readable](#), [Microsoft Editor](#), [Wordtune](#), and so many more.

These tools vary in terms of price (Some are even free or have free versions.), features offered, and platforms available (e.g., browser extensions, different devices). Some, like ProWritingAid are fairly comparable to Grammarly in their offering of comprehensive corrections and suggestions throughout, whereas some are more specific, like Wordtune, which offers alternative versions of sentences you'd like to tweak or rephrase. Some tools are more aimed at nonfiction, and others are better for fiction.

With all these options for writing help, you might be wondering which is better: AI writing help or human editors? As a human editor, I am biased, and after reading up on the matter, I've become even more convinced. In today's post, I'll describe six ways human editors are superior to AI writing help services.

Six Things

1. AI programs are based on algorithms and so may be very good at following rules, but they lack the finesse and depth a human editor has in determining exceptions to rules and other fine details. Algorithms are limited to what the programming tells them to do, and this cannot be tailored to every possible situation, leading to awkward language and even residual errors.

2. Numerous reviews of various AI programs complain about AI programs' missing glaring errors. So despite AI use of algorithms that should theoretically work in a systematic way, detecting subtle errors or errors in various contexts may be a little too complicated for machine minds. Supposedly black-and-white errors are often not as simple as they may seem in a stylebook. In addition to grammar and style errors, several reviews I read pointed to AI's inability to consistently fact check.

3. Though AI tools may offer suggestions about tone and formality, human editors are far superior to AI because of the subtle nature of differences in these categories. Bias, possible misinterpretations, and consistencies are other gray areas where human mentality beats AI.
4. Some users have found AI programs to be inconsistent, returning varying corrections and suggestions on the same piece of writing when submitted multiple times. This inconsistency casts doubt on the accuracy of AI services.
5. When something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Some AI marketing might leave you wondering, “What can’t AI do?” or believing, “This is the fix to all my writing problems!” But often the free versions of online writing tools, which are generally quite limited versions of the premium services, catch only some errors and offer a false sense of security, and even paid versions are problematic for the reasons listed above.
6. Note that almost all these reasons deal with proofreading only. A human editor can talk about unconvincing examples, character development, plot holes, bad use of bullet lists, and inappropriate humor; writing that is trite, tired, or just plain boring; and bad pacing, vision-only descriptions, and weak conclusions. In short, because AI relies on algorithms and most-common usage, AI can’t (as yet) promote your unique voice, your personal creativity, or whatever makes your writing stand out from the crowd.

And you don’t have to take my word; some AI writing services even offer human proofreaders as an extra layer of security for error-free best writing. If even the companies providing these services see the benefit of human editors, that shows that although AI is a useful tool, it is not even close to being a final, single solution to all your writing problems.

Further Reading

If you are still curious about differences between human editors and AI writing services, I strongly recommend you check out other sources where this debate is ongoing, like [Quora](#). Particularly interesting is “[Editor vs. AI: NYT Copy Edit](#)” on the blog [Right Angels and Polo Bears: Adventures in Editing](#); in this, the author puts several AI tools to the test up against an actual *New York Times* editor on a [copy editing quiz](#) you can try yourself.

Bottom line: You wouldn’t rely on [Microsoft Word’s spelling and grammar check](#) to proofread your paper; AI writing services are not enough either. [ProofreadingPal’s](#) two-proofreader model, on the other hand, offers two expert human editors to use their higher-order brains and intellect to help you make your writing the best it can be. And we offer [free samples](#) to try us out.

—Sarah P.