Grammar Checkers: Keep your writing in line

InfoWorld examines six grammar checkers for DOS and Windows to keep your writing up to par.

All of the grammar checker in this bunch save one are quite similar in their capabilities. Although we did find performance differences.

DOS Products: Reference Software International's Grammar IV walked away with the title for the DOS grammar checker. Grammar IV's accuracy and basic editing capabilities in our error recognition tests contributed to its all-around strong performance. In addition, Grammar IV is compatible with an impressive list of word processors. Grammar IV shares the lowest list price, and we found the product to be a fine value.

Two products tied for the second spot among the DOS products: The Writing Tools Group's Correct Grammar for DOS, and Artificial Linguistics PowerEdit. Correct Grammar did well in our error recognition tests, and it didn't run into any problems with the product. It supports a wide range of word processors, and it works in both an interactive and a markup mode. The Writing Tools Group also has outstanding support policies to stand behind its products.

PowerEdit is something of a different breed in the grammar checker world. While it excelled in our error recognition test, it's capabilities go above and beyond those of the others. PowerEdit will check the writing style and consistency, for example, and the analytical capabilities are quite extensive. These features do not come cheap, however, as PowerEdit is the most expensive product, by far, in the group. In addition, the product is somewhat limiting; unless you are a WordPerfect or a Word user, you can only use PowerEdit by converting your files to ASCII for analysis.

Windows Products: Reference Software's Grammar for Windows was the overall top performer in our comparison. Grammar for Windows was quite accurate in our error recognition tests, although like the rest of the products, it was not perfect. Grammar for Windows had the most impressive list of compatible word processors and formats, including Microsoft's Rich Text Format. Grammar for Windows also is a fine value; it is priced the same as the DOS grammar checkers, and it is cheaper than its Windows competitor. Grammar Windows is backed by the same impressive support policies as those provided in the DOS version.

The Writing Tools Group's Windows product - Correct Grammar for Windows - finished slightly behind Grammar Windows. Correct Grammar for Windows did well in our performance tests, and the file support is quite extensive, including all Windows applications. In addition, Correct Grammar for Windows is available with some Windows word processors (Lotus Ami Pro, for example). Correct Grammar for Windows is priced slightly higher than Grammar for Windows, and the performance is quite strong.

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INSIDE PRODUCT COMPARISON

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Keep writing in line.

In this roundup, we look at six commonly available products and their grammatical capabilities. Lifeline's Correct Grammar, Version 3.0 and Correct Grammar for Windows, Version 1.0 Reference Software's Grammar IV, Version 2.0 and 4.0; Artificial Linguistics PowerEdit, Version 1.4 and Qie Software's RightWrite, Version 4.0.

Parsers and Rules. The key to the success of these programs lies in their interaction between parser and rule application. If the parser isn't sophisticated, it will misinterpret the sentence and won't know the difference between verb and subject. In that case, the rule application will also be wrong because it will apply its rules to a misdiagrammed sentence. If the program's rules are not sophisticated, the parser might get the sentence right, but a faulty rule system would apply the wrong rule or fail to apply any rule at all and mark an error.

English is such a complex and flexible language that no rule system can encompass our usage without many exceptions and special circumstances. These programs handle somewhat successfully this variability of English by letting the user choose which of the rules to apply to any given document. The programs generally: supply standard collections of rules that appear to fit the characteristics of particular writing tasks. For example, almost all have business, journalism, academic, fiction, and technical styles. Business rules look for simple, short sentences. Errors related to overuse of the passive voice are flagged, and the rules identify incorrect word order and phrases. The academic style will permit much longer and more complex sentences, will accept a higher level of passive voice and phrases, and will have a higher tolerance for jargon. Most programs will let you construct your own style or modify an existing style. You can turn rules on or off, and you can sometimes set the length of the sentences that will trigger a diagnostic.

Although all of these programs catch very simple errors of punctuation, trap more errors of agreement between verb and subject, usually flag passive voice, easily identify clauses or other object-able words and phrases, and highlight other errors of punctuation, not one of these programs is perfect. Complicated sentences with many clauses, varied punctuation, and many words between the verb and subject will confound these programs. Sometimes the confusion comes with an error not caught: on other occasions it will give an error message that has nothing to do with the sentence structure, and sometimes it flags the right error but with the wrong diagnosis.

Disagreement on Style. All this would be trouble enough without the experts disagreeing on what constitutes good or bad English style. Text from any source will produce many error messages. You can use an expert, from a classic of good usage such as Strunk and White's Elements of Style, and get a multitude of error messages. You can take examples from the Chicago Manual of Style and produce error messages. You can test a selection from The New Yorker, Newsweek, Scientific American, or any other well-edited periodical, and the grammar checker will find errors.

In spite of these problems, the best of these grammar checkers offer considerable help. They will catch obvious errors, when they mislabel something, they often find that you can improve the sentence. They will capture some common errors of comma placement and end-of-sentence punctuation with reasonable accuracy (if the sentence isn't too complicated). They also make an even more conscious of our use of the elements of style. The best of these programs offer guidance, such as on the finer points of the grammar of my sentences. For example, I create or add to a list of overused words, and phrases so that you can understand the errors in your writing.

Even with all their sophistication, the programs cannot identify the key problem raised by the following sentence, "Being in a dilapidated condition, I was able to buy the house very cheap." The programs don't notice that the sentence permits you to think that I was in a dilapidated condition, which is why I could afford the house cheap. To make a sentence, "Young and inexperienced, the task seemed easy to me." The grammar checkers don't flag this so you could rewrite it as "Young and inexperienced, I thought the task easy."

None of the programs caught sentences with parallel ideas expressed in a list form. Here's an example: "She met the French, the Italians, Spaniards, and Portuguese." You should write this as: "She met the French, the Italians, the Spaniards, and the Portuguese," but none of the checkers, set on business style, caught this error. Common cause of all of us endless difficulty, and our editors often disagree about comma usage. Still, none of these programs caught the missing comma in the following sentence, "O.D., who apparently just heard the report, came over to our table in great agitation.

All products had difficulty with complex sentences with semicolons, commas, and any sentence with embedded punctuation. For example, the sentence "You dedicated whistler requires a knife, a piece of wood, and a back porch" escaped error even with the misused colon. (The correct sentence with a colon would read, "You dedicated whistler requires a knife, a piece of wood, and a back porch.""") In our ratings, we paid more attention to errors missed than to correct grammar mismarked. Although correct elements of grammar errors cause some irritation, the serious problems come from errors that escape detection.

Grammar checkers work in two principal modes, with variations. Most, but not all, will work interactively with the text. In these, the grammar checker works through the text, analyzing words, sentences, and paragraphs, giving you the errors; offering suggestions; making the tutorial information available; and asking whether you want to skip or edit. This method takes time for large documents, but it makes most effective use of the program. All the programs also offer a "See Grammar" report, page 76.
Correct Grammar for DOS
Version 3.0

Correct Grammar, Version 3.0 for DOS offers a useful procedure for checking grammar for most DOS applications. It worked with a better inside WorldScript and WordStar.

Correct Grammar has both an interactive and a mark test mode but is true to most of these products. Its interactive mode is most effective. Correct Grammar 1.0 offers a wide range of styles for business, fiction, advertising, general legal, technical, and other writing needs. Its rule classes permit users to tailor the applicable rules for each class, permitting a considerable degree of customization. You can use your word processor’s spelling or Correct Grammar’s spellers, and you can use Correct Grammar to employ the user dictionary, from your word processor. The reliability statistics include the word, sentence, and paragraph measures as well as Flesch, Flesch-Kincaid, and Graening Fog indexes.

Grammatik IV
Version 2.0

A powerful tool with great flexibility, Grammatik IV competes against Correct Grammar and PowerEdit among the PC's best sellers. It operates much like its Windows counterpart, Grammatik for Windows. It has an endless name of applications and uses, and it works interactively and in mark and edit mode.

Grammatik’s interactive checking mode offers constant help and feedback about points of grammar. It can deal with a wide variety of present styles for business, technical, fiction, informal, and other writing. Grammatik IV has many rules and rule classes that can be turned on and off as needed and it has a complex and powerful rule-making language to tailor the product to the user’s needs.

Grammatik also permits word-processed help screens. You can customize the Grammatik spellers to use your word processor’s spelling program. If you use one of the common word-processing programs, such as WordPerfect 5.0, Word 4.0, or WordWrite IV, Grammatik is available via a hook-up from within the program. In addition, Grammatik takes most common word processing formats as well as ASCII.

Grammatik includes the standard readability factors for Flesch, Flesch-Kincaid, Graening Fog, and word-processing-length graphs. Grammatik IV produces graphs that match your text to three reference documents. The programs come with a sample document, a description of the Gettysburg Address, a Hemingway short story, and an insurance policy. You can use your own references to be sure your document matches the reference in tone and readability. There is also a concordance list that displays word frequencies for your text. You can design your own help screens, add topics to separate dictionary, and add tutorials to help systems. You can also create your own training set for specific problems in the text (for example, use of sentences that begin with “therefore”).

ERROR RECOGNITION

We ran this text through each of the programs set on standard business style without any other modifications. We noted what they identified as errors. We compared where they found errors in correct text and where they missed errors in incorrect text. Although it’s impossible to determine numerical comparisons, it became clear that some of these programs found most of the errors but not all of the omissions and mistakes where there were none, more than others did. It may be possible to adjust the settings on some of these programs.

See NOW WE TEST, page 72

Correct Grammar catches many errors of number, usage, punctuation, and spelling. However, it tends to misidentify quite a number of correct sentences as errors. For example, “If Sir, you refuse, I cannot predict what will happen” is flagged as an error in punctuation. While correct in itself, it is a problem to identify errors that are more serious. Correct Grammar misses a number of obvious sentence mistakes. “The early records of the city are disappeared and the story of its first years cannot be reconstituted” requires a comma that Correct Grammar misses. “Stevenson’s romances are entertaining, for they are full of exciting adventures” has a missed semicolon, which is also flagged. Correct Grammar misses the incorrect use of a colon. “Your dedicated whittler requires a knife, a piece of wood, and a back porch.” Correct Grammar finds a punctuation mistake in this correct sentence. “It was not Edward she cared for, it was San Francisco.”

Correct Grammar 3.0 for DOS works slightly better than Grammatik for DOS, but not overall as well. It does find some common usage issues with ease.

See CORRECT GRAMMAR, page 72

See GRAMMATIK, page 72

PowerEdit catches more errors than the other programs and is faster, flags fewer false messages than other programs. However, it doesn’t catch everything. For example, grammarians would tell us to join independent clauses by a comma, but PowerEdit fails to flag “Stevenson’s romances are entertaining, for they are full of exciting adventures.” Strunk and White’s Elements of Style, 4th ed., rules out such a comma, or else make two sentences.

Sentences with parentheses confuse PowerEdit. For example, it doesn’t catch the error in period placement relative to a parenthetical “in The driver glanced at his rear view mirror to observe the passenger (the one in the derby hat).” Nonetheless, while these failures indicate the imperfections of all grammar checkers, PowerEdit did a better job of checking for common grammar mistakes than the other products in this roundup. It also had fewer misidentifications of correct as errors. See Score: Excellent.

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RightWriter 4.0 offers a basic grammar checker for DOS word processors. It is quick and simple, not as sophisticated as Grammatik, Correct Grammar, or PowerEdit. One Software is working on a Windows version of RightWriter that is due to ship the first week of November.

The new version includes the normal styles for business, proposal, technical, and others. RightWriter provides basic grammar checking. You can modify styles by turning rules on and off, but you cannot make your own rules. The range of rules is narrower than for Grammatik, for example. RightWriter can only operate in a mark-up text mode, inserting a mark when an error is detected. The absence of an interactive mode with full grammar messages limits its usefulness.

The program does not have a spell checker. It will produce various readability statistics such as word, sentence, and paragraph length, and also includes a feature for checking text against the Oxford English Dictionary. There is a phrase dictionary to capture phrases, cliches, and other expressions, and you can produce your own list of such words and phrases.

Grammatik Windows Version 2.0

One of the two Windows grammar checkers, Grammatik Windows versions 2.0 builds on Grammatik IV, the basic product designed for DOS grammar checking. Using the same basic methodology, the Windows product adds an effective user interface. Much easier to use than DOS products, and especially easier than PowerEdit, Grammatik Windows 2.0 rates about even with Correct Grammar for Windows. Grammatik Windows is available with Lotus Ami Pro, Version 2.0.

Grammatik Windows checks documents both interactively and by preparing a marked file. It is more effective in the interactive mode because of the constant availability of on-line help and tutorial advice. The program has an array of rules arranged into styles to match business, general, technical, fiction, informal, or other standards. In addition, you can turn individual rules on or off, and you can create complex rules that become part of one of the standard styles or your own style. The rules-making capabilities of Grammatik Windows are extensive and complete. Not for novices, this customization capability permits Grammar to be targeted in almost any document imaginable.

A spell checker included with Grammatik Windows works well, but can be disabled so the program uses Word for Windows or Ami Pro's spell checker. In addition, Reference Software is working on an update for Word, Version 2.0. Grammatik Windows, while working directly with these products, may also accept files from most DOS word processing programs without special treatment. In addition, it does ASCII and Rich Text Format files.

Grammatik for Windows' customizable features parallel those of the DOS version, including readability scores, sample documents, concordance lists, help screens, and personal modification features.

Correct Grammar for Windows Version 2.0

Correct Grammar for Windows works within all Windows applications. This product, like Grammatik Windows, builds on its DOS counterpart, using the same logic and rule system. Correct Grammar offers a superb user interface through Windows, is easier to use than PowerEdit, and is about as easy as Grammatik Windows.

Correct Grammar for Windows uses both an interactive and mark document method for checking documents. Like most proofing tools, it works best interactively, thanks to the significant amount of on-line advice and tutorial information available to help resolve difficult grammatical questions. The program has its rules and styles that match your writing requirements, whether business, academic, custom, legal, technical, or other. You select which selection of rules to apply within each of these styles as well. You can also create your own rules to add or remove any of these rules in Correct Grammar. The customizing features allowed by this program are apparently quite complex, although the manual only mentions simple modifications. A special technical manual on writing your own rules is available for free but not supplied with the program. We did not evaluate this part of the program's features.

The spell checker works with your word processor's user dictionary for special vocabulary and the spelling function can be turned off or on only to flag, but not to lock up, potentially misspelled words. Correct Grammar supports all Windows applications through the clipboard and handles files from the major DOS word processing groups. Readability statistics, less elaborate than those of either Grammar, WordPerfect, or PowerEdit, include the standards for word, sentence, and paragraph data and indexes for French, French, and English.

While not perfect, PowerEdit stood out in our testing of this category. We found that the product caught more errors than the other products, and it didn't misdiagnose as many common errors as incorrect. All of the other products, save RightWriter, seemed to perform fairly evenly. Some products caught errors that others didn't, some misdiagnosed correct grammar and vice versa. We found that RightWriter tended to have problems with complex sentences, although the grammar-checking capabilities seemed to work fine with simpler sentences. All of the products performed well in cases that involve the passive voice, cliches, and undesirable words and phrases.
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Grammar checkers

to perform somewhat better than the standard settings, but we based our tests on what a non-expert might use.

We found that some programs have identical results that are similar. In other cases, the programs did not perform exactly the same. For example, some programs were able to identify the same errors, while others could not.

To test these programs, we used a variety of documents and text samples. We input text into the programs and compared the results with the expected output. We also checked the programs' ability to handle different types of text, such as scientific, technical, and creative writing.

In addition, we tested the programs' ability to handle different fonts, sizes, and styles. We also examined the programs' ability to handle multi-language documents.

Overall, we found that the programs were effective in catching errors, but there were some differences in their performance. Some programs were better at catching errors in specific areas, while others were better at catching errors in general.

Grammar checkers routinely offer the following features:

- Language detection
- Error correction
- Usage suggestions
- Style and tone
- Grammar rules
- Usage style

When testing these features, we found that some programs were more accurate than others. For example, programs that use machine learning algorithms were able to detect errors more accurately than those that use rule-based algorithms.

In conclusion, grammar checkers can be a valuable tool for anyone who writes. They can help catch errors that might otherwise go unnoticed, improving the quality of your writing.

Correct Grammar can find and correct errors quickly and easily. It works well with most word processors and can be used as a standalone application or as a plug-in for your word processor.

Grammar 4.1 uses a variety of algorithms to identify and correct errors. It is especially good at catching errors in names and terms, but it can also catch errors in other areas.

PowerEdit is a powerful editor that can catch errors in text. It is especially good at catching errors in technical documents, although it can also catch errors in other areas.

We recommend using a grammar checker to improve the quality of your writing. Choose one that fits your needs and is easy to use.
RightWriter provides an analysis of your document with various statistics about your document, in addition to various indexes such as Flesch and Flesch-Kincaid.

Grammatik Windows offers suggestions on how to correct questionable text. You can choose to replace text or ignore suggestions, for example.

Correct Grammar is compatible with any Windows application, and you can access Correct Grammar quickly and easily via a pull-down menu.

Because RightWriter only has a mark mode, all editing is done with your favorite word processor.

Score: Satisfactory.

Within Grammatik, for Windows, editing is very simple, reduced to changes of a word, letter, punctuation, and the like. You can do extensive editing. No enhancements can be added or changed from within Grammatik.

Score: Very Good.

We found that the Windows products—Correct Grammar for Windows and Grammatik Windows—in addition to PowerEdit, handled our basic editing category quite well. Correct Grammar's and Grammatik's editing capabilities parallel that of Windows and your favorite word processor, if you desire. Although PowerEdit doesn't have the advantage of the Windows interface, it does operate in two windows, and has color capabilities (if you have a color monitor) that make editing clean and understandable. RightWriter works a bit differently because it operates only in mark mode, but we found no problems with its performance.

RightWriter selects the file easily, and it will remove all marks if needed.

Score: Satisfactory.

Grammatik Windows shares file management with the Windows File Manager. It also follows Windows conventions for selecting files to be proofed. There are additional capabilities for removing markings placed in a text by the program.

Score: Good.

We found that the products performed equally in this category; none was awful. Correct Grammar for Windows and Grammatik Windows both use the file management capabilities of Windows. PowerEdit, while it can back up documents, for example, does not have file management capabilities from within the application.

RightWriter supports most common word processing formats and can work from within with keyboards in WordPerfect, WordStar, PFS, Multimate, First Choice and Q&A II handles ASCII. WordStar 2000. Word for Windows, XyWrite, and Office Write formats.

Score: Very Good.

Grammatik Windows lets you start the grammar checker from within Word for Windows and Ami Pro, although you must save your document first. Grammatik won't be able to use the latest version. Grammatik Windows' file compatibility includes Windows Write and Ami. It also supports file formats from all major DOS word processors, including WordPerfect, WordStar, and WordStar 2000, WordWrite, Q&A, Sprint, Troff, Vollkriter, XyWrite, PFS, Office Writer, and others. It can take files saved in Microsoft's Rich Text Format and in ASCII with and without paragraph information.

Score: Excellent.


Score: Very Good.

Both versions of Grammatik and Correct Grammar for Windows have the best file compatibility. Correct Grammar for Windows will run directly from several Windows word processors, and it is compatible with numerous others. Grammatik for DOS has several hot links to popular word processors, and the Windows version will run with Ami Pro and Word for Windows. In addition to supporting nearly every word processing file format, RightWriter also supports an impressive list of word processors. Correct Grammar for DOS supports a range of formats but will only run in several word processors if interactive mode. PowerEdit supports only two word processing formats; all others must be converted to ASCII, which we found to be quite tedious.
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Correct Grammar for DOS

The manual for Correct Grammar is clear, complete, and has an index. It offers good start-up information and has appendices for special issues related to memory management, video cards, and characteristics of particular word-processing programs. There is a basic learning document for tutorial purposes. Menus and the grammar manual information provided throughout the grammar checkers process are very helpful.
Score: Very Good.

Grammarmist IV

The documentation includes a manual for Grammarmist IV which contains instructions on how to set up the program and run it. At least half of the printer diagnostic commands are described in detail. The manual contains clear and concise instructions on how to use the program and reference documents. The program manual requires careful attention and thorough knowledge of grammar to be used effectively. There is useful information.
Score: Very Good.

EASE OF USE

Correct Grammar's capability to tailor styles and rules enhances its adaptability to different user requirements. In some cases, on-line help is effective, and grammar information is complete. The program can handle partial documents from a document and history system for custom rule writing.
Score: Good.

Although very easy to use in general, Grammarmist IV's customization options may challenge even the most expert computer user. The process of creating custom grammar rules and setting rules takes more time than expected. However, the capability to perform some tasks on and off permits the creation of custom styles without special programming. Menus are clear, and instructions are easy to understand.
Score: Very Good.

SUPPORT POLICIES

The Writing Tools Group has an unobtrusive 60-day money-back guarantee. In addition, the company offers unlimited free, but not toll-free, phone support from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific time, every business day, except Wednesdays, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. There is a fax and BBS support.
Score: Excellent.

Reference Software offers free, but not toll-free, extended technical support to registered users from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific time Monday through Friday. There is also a 60-day money-back guarantee. In addition to corporate extended support policies
Score: Good.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

We reached technical support relatively easily, and we found the staff to be polite and helpful.
Score: Satisfactory.

We had no problems getting through to technical support, and the technicians were helpful.
Score: Satisfactory.

VALUE

Grammarmist IV 2.0 for DOS is a reasonable, effective with a good user interface. This program is not as strong as PowerEdit and offers less grammar information than Correct Grammar for DOS. At $99, it is particularly well suited for users who need to check documents from many file formats or for those who have special editing needs. Score: Very Good.

At $295, PowerEdit is the most expensive product in the group. However, it is more specialized and intelligent than the other programs. It is a very powerful product, and we find it to be a fine value. Its main drawback is its lack of word processing support; it is a fine value for WordPerfect and Word Star users. Score: Satisfactory.

Company: Writing Tools Group Inc., One Park Drive, Suite 111, Sebastopol, CA 94926; (615) 250-3892.
List Price: $99.
Requires: IBM PC or compatible running DOS 2.0 (3.0 recommended), 512K of RAM, and a hard disk.

List Price: $99.
Requires: PC or compatible running DOS 2.0 or higher, 512K of RAM, and a hard disk.

Company: Artificial Linguistics, 201 N. Aikin Rd., Suite 1, Dallas, TX 75201; (800) 830-6176.
List Price: $295.
Requires: IBM AT, PS/2, or equivalent; EGA or VGA monitor; 12 megabyte disk drive; 470K of available memory; 1 megabyte additional available memory; and WordStar or WordPerfect word processor.

Other Categories: Other brands of word processors have similar features, but their costs vary. For example, Microsoft Word for DOS comes with a free grammar checker for $195. Score: Satisfactory.

Keep writing in line

The key to the success of these grammar checker programs lies in the interaction between parser and rule application.

The grammar checker will then follow up and remove all the marks you have made if you want. However, in this mode you usually do not have the advantage of tutorial advice. Correct Grammar and Grammaticus have Windows versions that differ in some respects from their DOS counterparts.

The scores developed for these products follow the testing procedures outlined in the sidebar "How We Test Grammar Checkers" (see page 88).
RightWriter's manual is clear and complete with an index and a reference card. The start-up information is useful and there are appendices for special issues related to different word processor formats. There is a section in the manual that walks you through a tutorial based on a test document. Messages are adequate. Score: Very Good.

Grammar Windows comes with a useful manual, a quick-reference card, and a superb on-line support for advice on grammar and help for program functions. The manual, however, has no index. The elaborate description of customization options takes up almost half the manual, including information on designing menus, creating rules, and creating rule classes. The rule system is quite complex and not appropriate for novices. Score: Very Good.

RightWriter remains easy to use, and the customization of rules helps tailor the product to your writing needs. Not as flexible as the other products in this comparison, RightWriter does have some capability to enter special word lists. Absent are an interactive mode, a spelling checker, and the capability to export partial documents. Score: Satisfactory.

Grammar Windows, similar to the DOS version, requires effort to customize adequately. If standard options serve well and if simple modifications meet a user's needs, over time, this version is very easy to use. Its complexity becomes apparent only when attempting to use the advanced customization features. Its Windows interface is relatively easy to understand, its on-line tutorial helpful, and its menu generally self-explanatory. Score: Good.

Que Software offers unlimited self-free support to registered users from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday. Que also offers fax support. Score: Very Good.

Support policies are the same as those for Correct Grammar for DOS. Score: Excellent.

The technical support from Que software was relatively effective. We had no trouble getting through to the support staff, although it was not a serious problem. Score: Satisfactory.

Grammar Windows is reasonably effective, with a familiar user interface. However, this program is not as strong in performance as PowerEdit. It is particularly useful for users who need to check relatively short documents often and those who handle word processing documents in many file formats. At $59, it is a bit cheaper than Correct Grammar for Windows. Score: Very Good.

At $119, Correct Grammar for Windows is fairly effective, and it has a solid user interface. Somewhat more effective than Grammar Windows but less successful in error recognition than PowerEdit, it will serve users who need a good desktop checker. Correct Grammar works directly with more Windows products than its competitors, but it has an inaccessible, user-modifiable rule system. It can handle a wide range of DOS word processing formats. Score: Good.

Requirements: IBM PC or higher running DOS 2.0 or later, required for hotkey interface. 500K of RAM, and a hard disk.

Requirements: PC with Windows 3.0, 1 megabyte of RAM required. 2 megabytes recommended. 450K of RAM required. Does not handle DOS 3.1 or later and Windows 3.0 or later.

Requirements: Intel-8088 or higher PC capable of running Windows 3.0. 1 megabyte of RAM required. Does not handle DOS 3.1 or later and Windows 3.0 or later.

We found that all of the products had fine documentation, save Correct Grammar for Windows, which doesn't ship with the customization manual, an integral part of the program.

We found Grammar Windows to be the easiest product to use, followed by both versions of Correct Grammar, Grammar IV, and PowerEdit. RightWriter was the most difficult, as it lacks an interactive mode and the capability to edit portions of a document.

The Writing Tools Group has the most extensive support policies, including a 60-day money-back guarantee and unlimited technical support. Reference software offers an 180-day money-back guarantee in addition to unlimited support. Artificial Linguistics and Que Software both offer unlimited technical support, and Que has a toll-free number.

We found that all of the products had satisfactory technical support. The work was helpful, but none went above and beyond the call of duty.

We found that the two Grammar Windows products give you the best performance for your dollar. The products are flexible and did well in our performance categories. For Correct Grammar, both the DOS and Windows versions, to be fine values. PowerEdit is much more expensive than the other products, but its capabilities stretch beyond those of a grammar checker. RightWriter is fairly priced, although it was an unspectacular performer.

My brother, you will be pleased to hear, is fine. - insert common.