Mistake Finder Checklist

A quick, last-pass grammar & clarity sweep before you publish

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How to use: Read your draft once for content. Then do this 3–5 minute checklist before you click Publish/Send.

Core agreements & basics

☐ Subjects match verbs in number (the team is / the teams are).

☐ Pronouns agree and have clear antecedents (this/that/which/it).

☐ Tense is consistent; no stray jumps between past/present/future.

☐ Person is steady (I/we/you/they) unless intentionally shifted.

Punctuation hotspots

☐ Introductory phrases take a comma ("After the test, we…").

☐ Serial/Oxford comma follows your house style (be consistent).

☐ Semicolons join related independent clauses; commas don't splice them.

☐ Dashes: use proper — em dashes — with no stray spaces (per your style).

☐ Quotation marks: punctuation inside/outside quotes per your style guide.

☐ Apostrophes for possessives (writer's vs. writers'); avoid greengrocer's apostrophes.

Word choices & consistency

☐ Common confusions: its/it's, there/their/they're, affect/effect, then/than.

☐ Hyphenation matches style (copy-edit vs copyedit); compound modifiers checked.

☐ Capitalization of key terms, job titles, and headings is consistent.

☐ Numbers follow one system (1–9 spelled out or numerals, units/symbols consistent).

☐ Jargon reduced or briefly explained; acronyms defined at first use.

Future Perfect Services

Formatting & spacing gremlins

☐ Curly quotes and apostrophes, not straight, if appropriate for the venue.

☐ One space after periods; remove doubles. No space before punctuation.

☐ Ellipses use your style (… or spaced . . .) consistently.

☐ Lists are parallel (each item same grammatical form).

☐ Headings and subheads use consistent capitalization and hierarchy.

☐ Links work, and link text accurately describes the target.

Clarity & flow

☐ Sentences vary in length; no marathon sentences or choppy chains.

☐ Paragraphs lead with clear topic lines; transitions guide the reader.

☐ Passive voice trimmed where stronger active verbs improve clarity.

☐ Tone matches audience and purpose; first/second person aligns with brand voice.

AI & copy-paste artifacts

☐ No fabricated citations, claims, or quotes. Verify names, dates, and stats.

☐ Remove repeated phrases, placeholder lorem text, and template boilerplate.

☐ Check for regional spelling drift (US vs UK) and make consistent.

Quick "Find" passes

☐ Double spaces: ␣␣

☐ Accidental repeats: and and, the the

☐ Stray spaces before punctuation: " ," " ." " ;"

☐ Double punctuation: ??, !!, ..

☐ Hyphen vs en/em dash: - vs –/— (per style)

☐ Ellipses: ... vs … (be consistent)

Final 2-minute pass

☐ Use Word's Read Aloud (or read it yourself). Mark anything that snags your ear, watching out for homophones!

☐ Run spellcheck/Editor, then re-scan changes for new errors.

☐ Save to both .docx and PDF. File name is clear and versioned.

Editing is more than correction. It's collaboration.