Line-level scorecard

Found in: Chapter-by-chapter line report · Full manuscript review

The sentence-level patterns, counted across the whole manuscript: filter words, passive voice, dialogue tags, clichés, repeated words and sentence openings. The counts show what is already strong as well as what to work on, so you don't spend revision time on a problem you don't have.

About these samples. Each example is a short excerpt from a real report we prepared for a client, used with the client's permission. To protect their privacy we changed character names, places and plot details that could identify the book, and each excerpt says what was changed. "[…]" marks a cut. Nothing was added to the findings.
The reports analyze the manuscript and suggest where things may be off. We don't write or rewrite any of the book. The writing stays entirely the author's.

EXAMPLE 1 · FROM A 2026 REPORT ON AN UPMARKET FAMILY DRAMA

What the numbers tell us

These are measured directly from your manuscript, not estimated.

Filter Words (2.8 per 1,000 words): EXCEPTIONAL
Industry standard for polished fiction: under 10 per 1,000. Your manuscript: *knew* 72, *felt* 83, *saw* 45, *heard* 28, *noticed* 8 — roughly 2.8 per 1,000 words across all perception verbs. This is top-tier control. (If you have been told your filter-word usage is a major problem, that assessment did not match the text. It is already a strength.)

Passive Voice (1.7): EXCEPTIONAL
Industry target: under 25.0. You are at 1.7. Your prose is almost entirely active.

Dialogue Ratio (27%): APPROPRIATE
Upmarket family drama runs leaner on dialogue than romance or thriller. 27% is right for an interiority-driven, atmospheric novel. Do not force it up.

Clichés (129 instances, genre average 87): SLIGHTLY ELEVATED
A modest polish target — primarily physiological stock phrases (the heart "banging against my ribcage," blood that "froze" or "boiled"). […]

Sentence-Start Variety (42.9% of sentences begin with a pronoun or name, genre average 33.2%): A REPETITION TARGET

Because the book is first person and close, sentences naturally begin “I…”. A light pass to vary openings will lift the prose. […]

Excerpt from a real client report, shortened (“[...]” marks cuts). It names no characters or places. Used with permission.

EXAMPLE 2 · FROM A 2026 REPORT ON AN UPMARKET FAMILY DRAMA

Section 3: Line edit — score 82/100 (strong: refinement, not remedial work)

Element	Score	Assessment
Active, Immersive Prose	90/100	Exceptional — Almost entirely active voice; high reader engagement
Filter-Word Control	92/100	Exceptional — Roughly 2.8 perception verbs per 1,000 words, top-tier
Showing vs. Telling	80/100	Strong — Emotion shown through body and action; undercut by a stated-subtext habit
Dialogue Craft	78/100	Strong — Distinct voices, but over-reliant on unusual tags and adverbs
Sentence Rhythm & Freshness	75/100	Good — Snappy and varied, but repetitive openings and stock physical imagery

Issue #2: Dialogue tag overload

- **Unusual tags run high.** Roughly half your dialogue tags are something other than “said” or “asked.” The manuscript reaches for *exclaimed, gasped, roared, shrieked, whispered* (16 times), *chuckled* (8), *retorted, slurred* — where the dialogue and the situation already carry the tone. Published fiction typically keeps unusual tags under a third; you are above half.
- **Adverbs lean on the tags.** Tags are frequently propped with adverbs — “said calmly,” “said emphatically” (repeatedly), “said softly,” “said cheerfully” — at roughly twice the recommended rate.

Excerpt from a real client report, shortened (“[...]” marks cuts). It names no characters or places. Used with permission.

EXAMPLE 3 · FROM A 2026 REPORT ON AN UNFINISHED ROMANTIC-SUSPENSE DRAFT

Qualifiers & adverbs

Word	Count	Recommendation
“just”	162	High. Target deleting 60% (roughly 97 instances). Your single highest-impact quick win.
“really”	58	Medium. Delete where it hedges rather than emphasizes.
“very”	17	Low. Manageable—challenge each one to earn its keep.

Excerpt from a real client report, shown as written (it names no characters or places). Used with permission.