

How to Become a Better Writer

Using too many words

There are plenty of writers out there that like to use too many words, however, to be a good writer you need to write with clarity. As a writer we often repeat ourselves or use too many words than is required. An example of this would be:

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this book, or need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the author directly

It would sound much better as:

Please contact the author directly if you have any questions

It's funny that we don't write like this. However, it has become acceptable and in fact a lot of readers prefer it. Unfortunately, we have fallen into the habit of using platitudes and long-winded expressions where we usually don't even think about it.

To be considered a good writer, you need to make sure that you review and edit your work carefully. Your readers will get distracted by lots of words.

Following are some tips that will help you recognise and remove the wordiness and padding in your writing:

Here's what you can do:

Unnecessary qualifiers

You might recognise qualifiers as adjectives and adverbs; that is, words that describe, or qualify, another word in the sentence. They're frequently used simply to show emphasis or because the writer doesn't feel confident that a word can easily

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stand on its own. In most instances you can remove qualifiers without changing the meaning.

Removing unnecessary qualifiers

A brief overview	An overview
A range of different ideas	A range of ideas
Actively pursue	Pursue
Carefully consider	Consider
Completely eliminate	Eliminate
Entirely inadmissible	Inadmissible
Exact replica	Replica
First priority	Priority
Fundamental challenge	Challenge
Major breakthrough	Breakthrough
Strictly prohibited	Prohibited

Wordy phrases

On occasion we use the stock phrase of several words when in most cases one word is enough. These phrases are usually clichés, where we use them out of habit, however, the use of clichés is a sign of an unthinking writer.

Replace this	With this
Owing to the fact that	Because
A large proportion of	Many
Until such time as	Until
As of this date	Today
During the time that	During, while
In the majority of cases	Usually, mostly
Be means of	With, by
In many cases	Often
Referred to as	Called

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The question as to whether	Whether
In connection with	About
If and when	If
Have the ability to	Can
In some instances	Sometimes
It would appear that	Apparently
In the event that	If
In light of the fact that	Since, because
In a situation in which	When
The month of February	February
For and on behalf of	For
To the fullest extent possible	Fully
Accounted for by the fact that	Because
A total in the amount of \$20,000	\$20,000

There is/There are

People use these as sentence starters when they don't actually add anything to the meaning. It is better to get straight to the point.

Here are some examples:

There are a number of taxation issues which need to be considered when considering the conversion of debt to equity	A number of tax issues need to be considered when converting debt to equity
There were several cash refunds identified which could not be explained	Several cash refunds could not be explained
There were no reasons given by the Department for denying us access to the records	The Department did not give a reason for denying us access to the records
There are a number of terms used in this module relating to the update of the chart of accounts which are given a	This module uses a number of terms relating to the update of the chart of accounts. They are explain below.

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brief description here to clarify their meaning	
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Repetition of words

This is a habit that we can easily fall into by repeating words, phrases, thoughts or ideas as it seems to move the writing process along. Sadly, this results in your text becoming confusing and tiresome for your reader.

Repetition has various forms like tautology, redundancy, and doubling, this all boils down to the same thing: using too many words.

Tautology

Tautology is saying the same thing twice, or even three times:

- They arrived one after the other ~~in succession~~
- We will not repeat the ~~same~~ mistake again
- Each year we ~~conduct an annual~~ review of global reporting practices ~~around the world~~
- The following opportunities for improvement were identified ~~as outlined below~~

Redundancy

Words that add nothing to the meaning should be removed:

- A database of ~~information~~
- ~~Potential~~ fire hazard
- Including ~~among other things~~
- The reason ~~why~~
- Glossary of ~~terms~~
- A ~~time period of~~ 10 years

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Doubling

Doubling is a pair of words that mean essentially the same thing:

- Any and all
- Each and every
- First and foremost
- Fit and proper
- Full and complete
- Goals and objectives
- Issues and problems
- Needs and requirements
- Terms and conditions
- True and correct
- Unless and until
- Wordy and verbose

Throat-clearers

Another principal cause of too many words is the ‘throat-clearer’. These ‘warm-up’ phrases and sentences seem to occur when writers are not sure how to get started, a bit like a nervous after-dinner speaker clearing their throat before they begin to speak.

Throat-clearers usually consist of platitudes or statements of the obvious that add nothing to the message:

- Needless to say...
- As mentioned above...
- It is important to note that...
- It is interesting to note that...
- May I draw your attention to...
- As you may or many not know...
- This letter sets out the reasons why...

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- During the course of our work we found...
- The purpose of this letter is to inform you that...
- In this regard we are please to advise you of the following information...

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