

101 Ways to Improve Your Writing

Chances are high “**that**” won’t change the meaning.

Chances are higher you can “**just**” delete it from your writing.

And “**then**” you can delete the silly and repetitive “**then**”.

Unnecessary Words

If the word doesn’t add information, toss it. (**absolutely, actually, basically, certainly, completely, definitely, literally, totally, virtually**)

Unnecessary words can be removed. (**began, begin, begun, start**)

Speaking of unnecessary, get rid of **down** and **up**.

Replace these overused words and show what made them breathe slowly or exhale sharply. (**breath, breathe, exhaled, inhaled**)

Resist the urge to have characters **nod, reach,** and **shrug** too often.

Strengthen Your Writing

Find stronger verbs and adjectives, eliminate **really** and **very**.

Get to the point. Don’t hedge. (**almost, hardly, kind of, little, may, might, probably, quite, rather, slightly, somehow, somewhat**)

These words force you to tell vs show. They are self explanatory, allow the reader to think for himself and become more involved in the story. (**appeared, decided, felt, heard, knew, pondered, realized, seemed, thought, understood, wondered**)

Use strong nouns and verbs instead of overusing adjectives and adverbs by deleting **-ly words**.

Dialogue

Dialogue tags (**asked, replied, said**) slow the pace and distract readers. Keep them for the first couple sentences to establish the conversation, allowing the reader to follow along. Add action to show what's happening and to form personality.

Passive Writing

Remove **-ing words** (which follow was and were) to make your passive sentences more active.

Eliminate these passive words (as much as possible).

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • am | • I'll - I'm - I'd - I've |
| • are - aren't | • is - isn't |
| • be - been - being | • it's |
| • can - can't | • make |
| • could - couldn't | • must |
| • did - didn't | • shall |
| • do - don't - done - does | • should - shouldn't |
| • give | • was - wasn't |
| • had - hadn't | • we'd |
| • has - hasn't | • were - weren't |
| • have - haven't | • would - wouldn't - would've |

More Edits

Avoid clichés.

Resist the urge to tell, show instead. (it's cold - she shivered)

Delete unnecessary scene setting, get on with the story.

Delete redundancies. (she clapped her hands - he shrugged his shoulders)

Avoid what's not happening. (he didn't respond, the room never quieted)