Cutting Through the Clutter

Write for Readability

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How Do We Read?
How Do We Read?

We Are Distracted
How Do We Read?

• We Are Distracted
“Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words, but now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski.”

Author: The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains
Reading Style

.transitions 402x457

Equals Social Style

Details

Facts

Mood

Fun

Analytical
(29.6%)

Task-Directed
Responsiveness

Driver
(21.1%)

Tell-Directed
Assertiveness

Ask-Directed
Assertiveness

Amiable
(21.2%)

People-Directed
Responsiveness

Expressive
(28.1%)
Motivation

Three Top Motivators for Medical Professionals:

M. S. F.
“In order to be a great writer a person must have a built-in, shockproof crap detector.”

- Ernest Hemingway
Cutting Through Clutter
Question:

How eBooks were published in English in May, 2016?
Exercise 1:
How eBooks were published in English in May, 2016?

Answer:
27,342 at Best Count
Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills, and meaningless jargon.

— William Zinsser —
Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills, and meaningless jargon.

— William Zinsser —
Sample Tool: Word Map

http://worditout.com/word-cloud/make-a-new-one
#1 Active vs. Passive

You are loved...by me!

Dolt...
Active vs. Passive

Stay Active.

• My ninth-grade English teacher, Sister Gabrielle shown here, was right. Active voice is vital, passionate, happening.

• But awkward, meandering sentences often are formed by the passive voice. The passive voice is more commonly a reflex of confidence. Trying to distance yourself from the subject matter. Don’t beat around the bush. The straightest line from the doer to the action is usually more interesting—and more persuasive.

Look at These…
Active vs. Passive

Let’s Try These Out for Size:

“The entire stretch of highway was paved by the crew.”
Active vs. Passive

Let’s Try These Out for Size:

“When her house was invaded, Penelope had to think of ways to delay her remarriage.”
Active vs. Passive

Let’s Try These Out for Size:

“At dinner, six shrimp were eaten by Harry”
Active vs. Passive

Let’s Try These Out for Size:

“A number of things are indicated by these results.”
Let Us Start: Active vs. Passive

Let’s Try These Out for Size:

“**The balloon is positioned in an area of blockage by the surgeon and is inflated.**”
Active vs. Passive

You are loved...by me!

Dolt...
Active vs. Passive

I Love You!

Ahh...
Cut the meaningless crutch words. Literally.

- Maybe we’re nervous, or excited, or just like the sound of our own voices. Whatever the reasons, we stuff our writing with unnecessary words and use them as a crutch.
- These forgettable fillers our writing of its power. Be ruthless in cutting them and you’ll find your writing much improved.

Here’s a list of common crutch words and phrases...
Superfluous Words

Common crutch words:

- went
- quite
- truly
- is/was/were
- very
- actually
- really
- like
- have/had
- so
- anyway
- could/should/would
- literally
- almost
- all
- what i mean is
- obviously
- happily
- as well
- amazing
- awesome
- rather
- suddenly
- somehow
Superfluous Words

Tautologies:
Superfluous Words

Tautologies:
# Superfluous Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needless Tautological Words and Phrases</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(already) existing</td>
<td>never (before)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at (the) present (time)</td>
<td>none (at all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(basic) fundamentals</td>
<td>now (at this time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(completely) eliminate</td>
<td>period (of time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continue to) remain</td>
<td>(private) industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>currently (being)</td>
<td>(separate) entities</td>
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<td>(empty) space</td>
<td>start (out)</td>
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<tr>
<td>had done (previously)</td>
<td>write (out)</td>
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<tr>
<td>introduced (a new…)</td>
<td>(still) persists</td>
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<tr>
<td>mix (together)</td>
<td>(group) consensus</td>
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"You Call That a Knife?"

Let’s Cut!!!

"Trouble is caused when people disobey rules that have been established for the safety of all."
Let’s Cut!!

“The subjects that are considered most important by students are those that have been shown to be useful to them after graduation.”
“In the not too distant future, college freshmen must all become aware of the fact that there is a need for them to make contact with an academic adviser concerning the matter of a major.”
#3 Prepositional Phrases

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<th>in spite of</th>
<th>regarding</th>
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<td>above</td>
<td>beneath</td>
<td>instead of</td>
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<td>against</td>
<td>But (except)</td>
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<td>in</td>
<td>past</td>
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<td>inside</td>
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Prepositional Examples

Unnecessary phrase: The opinion of the manager
Correction: The manager’s opinion

Unnecessary phrase: The obvious effect of such a range of reference is to assure the audience of the author’s range of learning and intellect.
Correction: The wide-ranging references in this talk assure the audience that the author is intelligent and well-read.

Unnecessary phrase: It is a matter of the gravest possible importance to the health of anyone with a history of a problem with disease of the heart that he or she should avoid the sort of foods with a high percentage of saturated fats.
Correction: Anyone with a history of heart disease should avoid saturated fats.
“The cause of our schools’ failure at teaching basic skills is not understanding the influence of cultural background on learning.”

“Our schools have failed to teach basic skills because educators do not understand how cultural backgrounds influence learning.”
Another Called a String

A revision of the program will result in increases in our efficiency in the servicing of our customers.

If we revise the program, we can serve our customers more efficiently.
Persuade Faster!
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