



Fifteen Phrases You Can Lose

Good writing is essential to your ability to communicate with clients, judges, colleagues, and those who read your blogs and social media posts (whom you hope to convert to clients at some point). Whether you are putting together formal articles and briefs or sending a quick email response, your writing can confirm that you are a professional adult... or tell a different story.

Even the best of us will succumb to typos, and unless they are in a particularly embarrassing place (like a resume), we will be forgiven. But systematic use of unnecessary phrases that muddle your meaning can be a turn off for your readers. Here are some common culprits of cluttered copy that can be stricken from your lexicon post haste:

Redundancy. Our speech contains a lot of redundancy, and it is easy to let some of these conversational quirks sneak into your writing. But what is ok for informal speech can be disruptive when in print. Reducing repetition is an easy way to bring the focus back to the idea you are trying to elucidate. All of these could be shortened to just one word:

- Absolutely necessary
- Exactly the same
- Summarize briefly
- Close proximity

Unnecessary formality. Unnecessary formality is the cause of what most non-lawyers would describe as “legalese.” Many of the words mechanically inserted into documents can and should be removed. Common offenders:

- In the absence of (absent)
- Aforementioned (remove entirely)
- All such things as may be necessary (just “necessary”)

Emphasis that is not. Some emphasis words are so commonly used that they no longer do anything to add force to an argument. They can also add a bit too much hyperbole, giving your articles an inappropriate tone. Use these (and other) “ly” words sparingly:

- Really
- Severely
- Extremely
- Completely





Disposable phrases and clauses. This category includes words like “which”, passive voice phrases like “there is” and clauses that cannot stand on their own, such as “as a matter of fact.” You can shorten or eliminate them without detracting from a piece’s substance.

For the most part
Due to the fact that
In a manner of speaking
For all intents and purposes

Keeping a list of outlawed words and phrases handy will help you become more conscious of your phrasing. As you practice attention to (unnecessary) details, concise writing will become a habit. You may also try reading things out loud. You will likely find yourself tripping over awkward and unnecessary language. If it is difficult for you, your readers likely feel the same.

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