Revising, Part 6 - Eliminate Clutter – Common "Wordiness" Phrases

This is a list of the most common wordiness phrases:

- Due to the fact that = Because
- Because of the fact that = Because
- In the event that = If
- In order to = To
- In spite of the fact that = Although
- It would appear that = Apparently
- With regard to = Regarding
- In many cases = Often
- In most cases = Usually
- It is probable = Probably

There are two schools of thought on the best way to eliminate clutter. First, you need to recognize it in your own writing. Second, you need to recognize when other people are doing it. To recognize it in your own writing, let's try something counterintuitive: intentionally putting it in there! Write a short paragraph using *only* the wordiest phrases you can come up with. Here's our example:

Cluttered: Due to the fact that the dog under my ownership appeared to be unable to resume his sleep cycle with the ease one would expect, I made the decision to contact my local veterinarian with regard to my concerns in order to determine the most likely causes for the dog I care for being unable to properly rest. The doctor who cares for animals and specializes in their medical treatment discussed several possibilities that may be the cause of my animal's struggles with restfulness, and the veterinarian and I determined it would be the best course of action to bring my companion to the office at which the doctor was located and worked. The doctor performed several tests with instruments of his specialty to determine that in cases such as the canine companion with whom I live, dogs who are younger tend to be fuller of energy than dogs who are older. The veterinarian wrote a prescription of two walks per 24 hour cycle for my pet.

Not cluttered: My dog couldn't sleep, so I called the vet, who told me it was because my dog isn't using up enough of his puppy energy. The vet told that I need to walk my dog twice a day.

Note how also that in the cluttered example above, we included several unnecessary synonyms and clunky definitions for words that could be stated much more simply. This could be jargon.

Make it an activity: With a group of friends, see who can write the longest half-page paragraph and reduce it to the smallest amount of words with the same general meaning. The one who trims down the clutter most wins! Bonus points for conveying complex meanings.