

- **weasel words - that are often overused**
  - Example: “that”
  - For example - she told me that she would wrestle the alligator.
    - Becomes - she told me she would wrestle the alligator.
  - Other weasel words
    - Just - can often be deleted without losing anything
    - Again
    - Really
    - Already
    - Own
    - Over
    - Ever
    - Still
    - Very
    - Thing
    - Far
    - Often
    - Also
    - Enough
    - Quite
    - Well
    - Maybe
    - Probably
    - Bit
    - Most
    - That
    - Any
    - Might
    - Then
    - Rather
    - Some
    - Only
    - A lot
    - A few
    - Extremely
    - So
    - About
    - Just
    - Started
    - Began
    - All
    - Many
    - Somehow

- Almost
  - Like
  - Close
  - Even
  - Sort
  - Pretty
  - Back
- 
- **“LY” adverbs**
  - Adverbs are likely unneeded or a stronger verb would be better
- **Passive weasel words**
  - Unless the word “was” is used as a linking verb, it is likely better to rewrite the sentence in an active voice. “Had” can often be deleted.
  - Example
    - “Was playing” becomes “played”
  - Examples
    - Was
    - Were
    - There was
    - There were
    - Had

## WEASEL WORDS



AGAIN **REALLY** ALREADY OWN OVER EVER STILL  
**VERY** THING FAR OFTEN ALSO ENOUGH QUITE WELL  
MAYBE PROBABLY BIT MOST THAT ANY MIGHT THEN  
RATHER SOME **ONLY** **A LOT** A FEW EXTREMELY SO  
ABOUT **JUST** STARTED BEGAN ALL MANY SOMEHOW  
ALMOST LIKE CLOSE EVEN SORT PRETTY BACK

(^These words often don't add anything to the story but word count.^)

-LY- ADVERBS

(Adverbs are likely unneeded or a stronger verb would be better)

WAS WERE THERE WAS THERE WERE HAD

(Unless the word “was” is used as a linking verb, it's likely better to rewrite the sentence actively. “Had” can often be deleted.

-ING- EXAMPLE: WAS PLAYING = PLAYED)

- **Puff words - overly dense vocabulary words, words that often the author uses to look smart**
  - Example: Utilize - always use used vs utilized
    - example: she used the wrench to tighten the bolt.

- Vs: she utilized the wrench to tighten the bolt.
- Others
  - Commence vs begin/start
  - Expedite vs speed-up
  - Endeavor vs try
  - synergize vs collaborate
- **Filter words - a veil between the reader and the thing being described**
  - [What are filter words? How to identify and remove them from your writing](#)
    - [Tighten your prose: Filter words. : r/writing](#)
  - Examples
    - He watched
    - She noticed
    - He saw
    - to see
    - to hear
    - to think
    - to touch
    - to wonder
    - to realize
    - to watch
    - to look
    - to seem
    - to feel (or feel like)
    - can
    - to decide
  - He watched the black cat jump over the fence. Vs. - the black cat jumped over the fence.
    - There is no reason to draw attention to the fact that the character is seeing or noticing something; they're the POV, and they already know that. There are good times to use this, but MOST often, they're overly used. These are good to use sparingly because they make the reader feel close to the action, but over-usage is repetitive.

see	notice	down	a lot	in order to
hear	be able to	in	perhaps	were
think	note	out	maybe	are
touch	experience	reaching	quite	is
wonder	begin	almost	amazing	was
realize	start	that	literally	am
watch	sort of/kind of	under	stuff	like
look	used to	over	things	so as to
seem	finally	below	got	additionally
feel	really very	still	totally	in addition to
can	just	slightly	many	-ing verbs
decide	only	own	(most adverbs)	you
sound	even	of	suddenly	as
know	up	basically	then	

- **Time words**

- Example: Suddenly
  - If you set up the scene properly, you don't need to say suddenly. The reader should already anticipate what's coming.
    - Example: suddenly, a shot rang out.
    - Just say: a shot rang out.

- **Others**

- Then - far too often "and then" just say and.
- Next
- After that
- Subsequently
- Finally

- Readers know the book is chronological

- **Empty calorie words - Words that don't add anything**

- example: something - always ask
  - Can I cut it?
  - Can I substitute it? Often, the most common
  - Can I avoid it by changing the sentence?
- Example: there was something creepy about the old house.
  - This is very passive. Starting any sentence with "There was" is a passive
  - Vs. The old house groaned in the winter storm (showing it's creepy)
  - Or, the old house groaned creepily.
- Others
  - Something - 93 uses
  - Stuff - 0
  - Somewhat - 0
  - Anything - 45
  - Everything - 28

- **Inflation words - intensifier words to hike up stakes**

- example: really - I was really tired after the long hike." Vs I was tired after the long hike. - exempt in dialogue
  - Even better: after I dragged myself home, I was too tired to make dinner and fell asleep on the couch." Showing vs telling
- Others
  - Very -
  - Truly -
  - Highly -
  - Precisely -
  - Totally -
  - Actually -
  - Really -
- **Hedge words - opposite of inflation words, trying to minimize prose**
  - example: usually - exempt in dialogue
    - I usually take my coffee with cream and sugar. Vs I take my coffee with cream and sugar.
  - Others
    - A bit -
    - Sort of -
    - Kind of -
    - In a sense -
    - Generally -
    - Probably -
    - May
    - Would
    - Possible
    - Could
    - Might
    - Suggest
    - Seem
    - Assume
    - Indicate
    - should
- **Sloppy words - overused in culture in general - trendy of-the-moment words**
  - Modern slang is appropriate for books intentionally set in a modern time. Meaning, if read in twenty years, the book will still read as if it is from 2025. In Scifi, fantasy, and historical fiction, do not use modern slang as it is jarring.
  - Example: Literally
  - Others
    - Organic
    - Low-key

Instead of...					
<u>Happy</u>	<u>Dark</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Old</u>	<u>Look</u>
Blissful	Dim	Capable	Atrocious	Ancient	Eye
Cheerful	dismal	Excellent	Corrupt	Aged	Examine
Contented	Dusky	Favorable	Deplorable	Broken-down	Gape
Delighted	Gloomy	First-rate	Despicable	Dilapidated	Gawk
Elated	Murky	Generous	Evil	Used	Gaze
Ecstatic	shaded	Honorable	Harmful	Feeble	Glance
Gratified	shadowy	Marvelous	Horrible	Frail	Glimpse
Joyful	Unlit	Pleasant	Immoral	Musty	inspect
Overjoyed		Splendid	Rotten	Obsolete	Observe
Pleased	<u>Scared</u>	Wonderful	Sinister	Stale	Peek
Tickled	Afraid	Worthy	Spoiled	Ragged	scrutinize
	Alarmed		Tainted	Worn	Spy
	Apprehensive		Wicked		
<u>Interesting</u>	Disturbed	<u>Great</u>	<u>Bright</u>	<u>Sad</u>	<u>Delicious</u>
Animated	Fearful	Considerable	Incandescent	Depressed	Appetizing
Challenging	Frightened	Distinguished	Lustrous	Dejected	Delectable
Engaging	Horried	Grand	Luminous	Discouraged	Exquisite
Fascinating	Paralyzed	Mighty	Gleaming	Dismal	Palatable
Gripping	Petrified	Noteworthy	Shimmering	Downhearted	Savory
Inviting	Shocked	Powerful	Shining	Gloomy	Scrumptious
Intriguing	Troubled	Remarkable	Sparkling	Grim	
Keen	Unnerved	Worthy		Heartbroken	
Provocative	Worried			Miserable	
Sharp				Sorrowful	
Spirited				Wretched	
Thought-provoking					

You should have a personal banned word list to never use

- **Expendable words** - needless words, separable phrasal words that can be cut and not lose meaning
  - Example: sat down
    - She sat down can just be "she sat"
  - Others
    - Faded away
    - Gathered together
    - Returned back
    - Spread out
    - Here is a full list
    - Stood up
    - Cleaned up
    - Backed up
    - Put away
    - Turned around
    - Woke up
    - Wiped off
    - Write down
    - Think over
    - [Separable Phrasal Verbs - Purdue OWL](#)
  - If it's possible to cut a word, always cut it