

Lazy Words

“This”

This what? “This” should refer to a noun that follows it in the same sentence, not something in the sentence or paragraph before. Incorporating **this habit** into your writing will enhance clarity and precision.

“It is”, “there is”, “there are”, “there have been”, etc.

Compare these two statements:

“It is noted that there are few reasons to use these weak constructions. It is in your best interest to avoid them because they weaken your writing.”

Versus

“These weak constructions serve as a debilitating crutch for lazy writers. Your writing is stronger and more descriptive when you rephrase to avoid them.”

“Important”

“Clearly”

“Clearly important”

If you made the point clear or important, you wouldn’t need to say so.

To make a point appear important to your readers, *explain* its importance.

“Always”

really?

“Impact”

This wonderful word has colonized the scientific parlance to the detriment of both. I am rarely “impacted” by the “impacts” in someone’s “impactful” presentation, just bored.

What does “impact” really mean? To come into forcible contact with another object, or the action of something that does so. *“The asteroid impacted the Yucatan and caused mass global extinction. Its impact sent dust and sulfuric acid in to the atmosphere, raining hot acid upon the planet, darkening the skies, and chilling the climate.”*

In medical terminology, the word refers to a lodged or stuck object such as an impacted bowel or wisdom tooth. “Impact” in business parlance has been overused and diluted to become synonymous with “change”, “effect”, and “affect”, good or bad, monumental or trivial. “Impacts” are benefits or harms. To impact is to help or to harm. In short, “impact” is used to mean less and less. Don’t abuse this word unless you want to sound like an ignorant businessman with an Executive MBA, whatever that is. I will write or say “Ka-pow!” every time you do.

“Shed light”

You might “shed” light if you were a god or goddess, but humans shed hair, skin flakes, fast food wrappers, and bad relationships. No shedding! Bleh!

And just so you know...

“Data” is the plural of **“datum”**, not a mass noun (like blood), and so it should be treated as a conventional plural noun, as in “Most data are reliable, but this datum is not”.

“Species” is both a singular and plural word. **“Specie” is not a word.**

“Myriad” is an adjective meaning “many”, not a noun meaning “collection”. You have myriad bacteria in your left nostril but you cannot have “a myriad” of them, so don’t even try. Homer’s epic story the Illiad, is a noun, and a proper noun at that.

“Speciose” means “beautiful”, not rich in species.

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