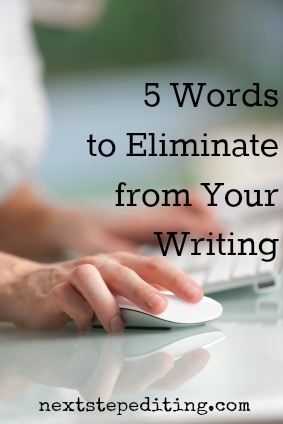
Five Words to Eliminate from Your Writing

by [Sandra](http://www.nextstepediting.com/author/sandra/)

1. **Thing-** Find a word that communicates what you mean without using this generic filler. If you need help, here are [seventeen synonyms](http://www.nextstepediting.com/seventeen-synonyms-for-thing/).
2. **That-** If your sentence includes “that,” take it out and see if the sentence still makes sense. If it does, take it out. If “that” is referring to a person, change it to “who.” (Example- “The person that called didn’t leave a message” should be “The person who called didn’t leave a message.”)
3. **Many-** Vague words like “many” or “few” aren’t clear enough. How many? How few? If you know the number, include it. Make your writing as precise as possible.
4. **Most adverbs-** Adverbs add to the meaning of verbs. But most of the time you can find a stronger verb that communicates your intent without the help of an adverb. “He whispered” is stronger than “He spoke quietly.” “She raced to class” is stronger than “She quickly ran to class.”
5. **Any word you wouldn’t use in a real conversation**- Your readers want to read your story in your voice. Be genuine.

Examine every word you put on paper. You’ll find a surprising number that don’t serve any purpose. -William Zinsser in *On Writing Well*

(Check out [five  more words to eliminate](http://www.nextstepediting.com/five-more-words-to-eliminate-from-your-writing/).)

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Comments

1. **http://1.gravatar.com/avatar/76aaa9ccf57c8bb96bbf8b038d47ad15?s=48&d=blank&r=G**[**Debra Bacon**](http://www.jeansblogs.com/)**says:**

[at](http://www.nextstepediting.com/five-words-to-eliminate-from-your-writing/#comment-3607)

Great reminder, and teaching post. Thank you.

1. **http://1.gravatar.com/avatar/7c954ea715a81d323b65a56e65b37ed6?s=48&d=blank&r=G**[**Sherry Stocking Kline**](http://familytreewriter.com/)**says:**

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Very helpful post, Jean!

1. **http://0.gravatar.com/avatar/4cadf3b26fb0dec11739b645b8ac270f?s=48&d=blank&r=GTom says:**

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Here are three that matter more: I, there, and very. Almost any sentence or clause with I or there can be recast to be more direct and powerful, especially if either of those words is beginning the sentence or clause. Very is a lazy writer’s excuse for not finding the lightning and instead settling for the lightning bug, as Twain put it.