

44 Overused Words & Phrases To Be Aware Of



1 Amazing / Awesome / Great

Great, amazing, awesome (our personal favorite); these are just a few stale superlatives stymying your writing. While these words may appear to be the perfect adjectives for nearly anything, that is precisely what makes them so vague. Try getting more specific. Here are some words you may use instead:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Unimaginable | 11. Unforeseen |
| 2. Unanticipated | 12. Significant |
| 3. Phenomenal | 13. Stunning |
| 4. Remarkable | 14. Startling |
| 5. Unbelievable | 15. Splendid |
| 6. Breathtaking | 16. Wonderful |
| 7. Tremendous | 17. Overwhelming |
| 8. Unexpected | 18. Stupefying |
| 9. Spectacular | 19. Staggering |
| 10. Unthinkable | 20. Unpredicted |



2 Nice

Nice

A notoriously non-descriptive word. For writers, it's a nearly unacceptable choice of word to use when you could pick one of the multitudes of better synonyms, like:

To say "pleasant"

1. Delightful
2. Divine
3. Commendable
4. Fantastic
5. Copacetic
6. Marvelous

Refined

1. Well-mannered
2. Decorous
3. Polite
4. Courteous

To describe a cool person

1. Cordial
2. Amiable
3. Charming
4. Winsome
5. Attractive
6. Genial



3 Like

Like

This word was originally used as an adjective to describe comparison. Its slow and painful conversion to an interjection is now dominating conversations for any Gen X- or Y-er that grew up with two-star-rated (or less) dumb blonde movies.

4 Actually

Actually

Most futile and overused word in the internet. *Actually*, when used as discourse marker (and often as a proposition, i.e. "I *actually* think we should order pizza *instead*."), has come to signal a difference of opinion, not facts.

5 And /or

And /or

Outside of the legal world, where most of the time this construction is used, it is neither necessary nor logical. Try using one word or the other.

6 “And also”

“And also”

This is often redundant.

7 As to whether

As to whether

The single word *whether* will suffice.

8 Basically, essentially, totally

Basically, essentially, totally

These words seldom add anything useful to a sentence. Try the sentence without them and, almost always, you will see the sentence improve.

9 Being that or being as

Being that or being as

These words are a non-standard substitute for *because*. ~~Being that~~ Because I was the youngest child, I always wore hand-me-downs.

10 Considered to be

Considered to be

Eliminate the *to be* and, unless it's important who's doing the considering, try to eliminate the entire phrase.

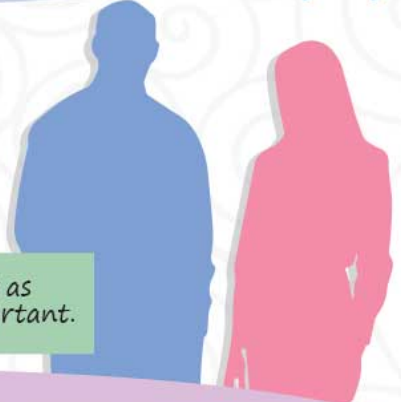


11

“Due to the fact that” Using this phrase is a sure sign that your sentence is in trouble. Did you mean *because*? *Due to* is acceptable after a linking verb (The team's failure was due to illness among the stars.); otherwise, avoid it.”

12

He/she Is a convention created to avoid gender bias in writing, but it doesn't work very well and it becomes downright obtrusive if it appears often. Use *he* or *she* or pluralize (where appropriate) so you can avoid the problem of the gender-specific pronoun altogether.



13

Equally as Something can be *equally important* or *as important as*, but not *equally as important*.

14

Etc. This abbreviation often suggests a kind of laziness. It might be better to provide one more example, thereby suggesting that you could have written more, but chose not to.

15

Each and every One or the other, but not both.

16

“**Firstly, secondly, thirdly, etc.**” Number things with *first, second, third, etc.* and not with these adverbial forms.”



17

Honestly Originally meant “in an honest and genuine manner,” but is now often used as general verbal filler. Do they honestly don't know what's going on? As if without the “honestly,” you would think they're lying.

18

Had ought or hadn't ought Eliminate the auxiliary *had*. You ~~hadn't~~ ought not to pester your sister that way.

19

“**Interesting**” One of the least interesting words in English; the word you use to describe an ugly baby. If you *show* us why something is interesting, you're doing your job.”

20

In terms of See if you can eliminate this phrase.

21

Irregardless No one word will get you in trouble with the boss faster than this one.

22

Just Use only when you need it, as in *just* the right amount.



23

Kind of or sort of.

These are OK in informal situations, but in formal academic prose, substitute *somewhat*, *rather* or *slightly*. We were ~~kind of~~ rather pleased with the results.

24

Literally

Might be confused with *literarily*, a seldom used adverb relating to authors or scholars and their various professions. Usually, though, if you say it's "literally a jungle out there," you probably mean *figuratively*, but you're probably better off without either word.

25

“

Lots or lots of

In academic prose, avoid these colloquialisms when you can use *many* or *much*. Remember, when you do use these words, that *lots of something* countable are plural. Remember, too, that *a lot of* requires three words: "He spent *a lot of* money" (not *alot of*).

”

26

Nature

See if you can get rid of this word. Movies of a violent nature are probably just violent movies.

27

“

Necessitate

It's hard to imagine a situation that would necessitate the use of this word.

”

28

Of

Don't write *would of*, *should of*, *could of* when you mean *would have*, *should have*, *could have*.

29

On account of

Use *because* instead.

30

“

Only

Look out for placement. Don't write "He *only* kicked that ball *ten yards*" when you mean "He kicked that ball *only* ten yards."

”

31

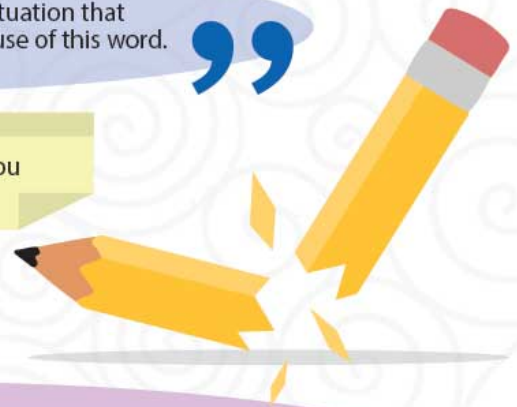
Orientate

The new students become oriented, not orientated. The same thing applies to *administrate* -- we *administer* a project.

32

Per

Use *according to* instead. We did it *per* your instructions? Naah. (This word is used frequently in legal language and in technical specifications, where it seems to be necessary and acceptable.)



33

Plus Don't use this word as a conjunction. Use *and* instead.

34

Point in time Forget it! *At this time* or *at this point* or *now* will do the job.

35

Previous As in "our previous discussion." Use *earlier* or nothing at all.

36

“**The reason why is because**”
Deja vu all over again!

37

So as to Usually, a simple *to* will do.

38

Suppose to, use to. The hard "d" sound in *supposed to* and *used to* disappears in pronunciation, but it shouldn't disappear in spelling. "We *used to* do that" or "We were *supposed to* do it this way."

39

“**Thru**” This nonstandard spelling of *through* should not be used in academic prose.

40

'Til Don't use this word instead of *until* or *till*, even in bad poetry.

41

Thusly Use *thus* or *therefore* instead.

42

Try and Don't try and do something. Try to do something.

43

“**Utilize**” Don't use this word where *use* would suffice. (Same goes for *utilization*.)”

44

Very, really, quite (and other intensifiers)

Like *basically*, these words seldom add anything useful. Try the sentence without them.

