



**DeYoung Consulting Services**

*Helping People Learn up to Their Potential*

Do you remember *The Elements of Style* from your school days? Originally written by William Strunk, Jr. and then revised by E.B. White, it remains one of the best-known and revered books on writing. One of the main principles of the book is "omit needless words." Strunk and White advocate that each word should contribute to the written document.

This applies to business writing, as well. Here are a few tips to help you tighten your writing and eliminate unnecessary words.

**Use charts and graphs.** When describing trends in revenue, attendance or performance, use a chart or graph to show changes. Visual elements can save you sentences, if not paragraphs, and communicate a clear, concise message.

**Eliminate superfluous words.** Words and phrases like *very*, *really*, *who is* and *which was* are often unnecessary. Try a stronger word or rephrase the sentence as in these examples.

*We are very excited about our daughter's engagement.*

*We are elated about our daughter's engagement.*

*My son, who is a student at the university, plays football.*

*My son, a student at the university, plays football.*

**Use active verbs.** Try to purge your writing of helping verbs. This not only cuts down on wordiness, but makes your writing more interesting, as in this example:

*We are expecting that our sales of gadgets will rise during the first three months of the coming year.*

*We expect sales of gadgets to rise during the first quarter of 2008.*

**Stick to your main point.** Don't get lured away from your primary message by providing too much background material or unrelated information. You might inadvertently lose your reader or weaken your writing. Focus on communicating your main message and all relevant points.

**Try addendums.** If you think your audience might benefit from some additional information, use an addendum. You can attach articles, previous reports or summaries to your written piece. Addendums will provide your reader with additional information without detracting from your message.

As always, I'm available to help eliminate unnecessary words from your training materials or curriculum – or develop new materials, if you need them. Give me a call and we can talk through your situation.

*Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.*

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