Software Document Bad Words List, original adapted from Dan Stearns

Do not use these words in any CPE 308 document or deliverable. They convey little information and won't help the reader understand. They are particularly egregious because they are used so pervasively and few people question them.

- and/or, etc., misc.

    It is always possible to re-write the sentence to remove these vague terms.

- basically

    A common speech filler; in a document, it is of the same genre as generally and is basically unclear.

- compatible

    These are hundreds of different opinions on this word. Say what you mean. (e.g. The computer must be able to run Doom.)

- easy, easier, easiest, easily, simply, hard, harder, hardest

    These are impossible to test. State some specific number to write a clear sentence.

- efficient, more efficient, less efficient

    Unless you are discussing furnaces, this word is vague. Say what you mean.

- flexible, flexibility

    Unless you are discussing gymnastics, this word is vague. Say what you mean.

- like

    A bad word when used in speaking, like, you know, during a two minute talk. If you use this word, you will like get an F on your two minute talk.

- maximize, minimize, optimize

    Say clearly what parameters you are trying to maximize. (e.g. performance is more important than space; the designer should always sacrifice space for performance)

- module, modular, modularity

    These terms have a wide variety of definitions, probably more than compatible. Module is acceptable if the context defines the word (e.g. a programming language module)

- quickly, more quickly, less quickly, fast, faster

    Same problem as easy.

- return key

    Try and find it. There is no easy solution to this dilemma since keyboards vary.

- user friendly

    Who are you kidding?

- usually, generally, should, probably

    These are all of the same, unclear, genre. Write what you mean. A document reader hates these words.

- very

    If emphasis is needed, use a precise word.

Last updated on 1/2009