

Words and Phrases I Hate



Unnecessary, imprecise,
distracting, florid

Unnecessary filler

“In order to...”

This can always be replaced by
“To...”

Unnecessary filler

“As a means to...”

This can usually be replaced by
“To...”

Unnecessary filler

“is due to the fact...”

This can always be replaced by
“because...”

Unnecessary filler

“as well as...”

This can usually be replaced by
“and...”

*Yes, it can be a way of mixing up the text a bit, but if you have so many “and”s they need mixing up, your sentence is probably too long....

Unnecessary filler

“as well as...”

But, can be used to keep sentences from reading like poorly structured lists....

“...sets the scale and temperature of X, as well as the distribution of Z.”

Unnecessary filler

“It is important to note...”

Just note it.

Unnecessary filler

“It is worth mentioning that...”

Just mention it.

Unnecessary filler

“In this/our paper...”

“In this/our research...”

“In this/our sample...”

Almost always implicit in the
fact that it's your paper the
reader is holding...

Vague words for specific things

“systems”

“These galaxies/stars/AGN/planets”
almost always carries more
content than *“these systems”*

Vague words for specific things

“objects”

Same as for “*system*”:

“These galaxies/stars/AGN/planets”
vs *“these objects”*

Fancy words for simple things

“utilize”

What? Are you too fancy to
just *“use”* something?

Fancy words for simple things

“represent”, “serve as”

e.g., *“These galaxies represent the best probes of dark matter halos”*

How about just “are”?

Fancy words for simple things

“perform”

verb

1. carry out, accomplish, or fulfill (an action, task, or function).

"I have my duties to perform"

synonyms: carry out, do, execute, discharge, bring about, bring off, accomplish, achieve, fulfill, complete, conduct, effect, dispatch, work, implement;
[More](#)

Why say *“we performed fitting”*
rather than *“we fit”*?

Also, I think of clowns.

“Nounification”/“Nominalizations”

Overuse of words like “*perform*”
comes from tendency to turn
verbs into nouns

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/23/zombie-nouns/>

<http://ed.ted.com/on/eJKYN8dx#review>

See also: <http://writersdiet.com>

Nounification

“We performed fitting...”

“We fit...”

“is dependent on”

“depends on”

“We used X for map creation”

“We created maps with X”

Distracting Habits

Overuse of “*our*”
“*our data...*”, “*our sample...*”

Fine when *contrasting* with
other's data, sample, etc.

But, better to go with
impersonal “*the*” as a default.

Frequently misused

“*which*” vs “*that*”

In american english, “*which*” is used to introduce non-essential information. If you could add “*by the way*”, use “*which*”

Frequently misused

“*which*” vs “*that*”

Phrases that begin with “*which*” are usually set apart by commas.

Phrases that begin with “*that*” usually aren’t, because the information is essential to meaning.

<http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/which-versus-that>

Which vs That

“which”

“The sample of AGN, which were selected in the optical, contained 3000 objects”

“that”

“The sample of AGN that were selected in the optical was incomplete due to dust obscuration”

Frequently misused

“*fewer*” vs “*less*”

“*fewer*” is used for discrete, countable objects. (“*fewer solar masses*”)

“*less*” is used for continuous quantities (“*less mass*”).

Frequently misused

“*farther*” vs “*further*”

“*farther*” is only used for real physical distances. (“*The farther planet...*”)

“*further*” is used for metaphorical/
figurative distance (“*Further studies...*”)

Frequently misused

“*affect*” vs “*effect*”

“*affect*” is “to influence”, and is usually used as a verb. (“*Gravity affects...*”)

“*effect*” is the result of something, and is usually used as a noun (“*The effect of gravity...*”)

<http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/affect-versus-effect>

Frequently misused

“*since*” vs “*because*”

“*because*” only means one thing.

“*since*” means “*because*” and “*in the intervening time between the time mentioned and a later time*”, forcing the reader to choose one of the meanings.

Bad horrible words that must
never be used.

“impactful”
“as evidenced by...”

Just...<shudder>...don't.