

Bad Words! Avoid Them and Write More Effectively

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Want to avoid common mistakes writers make? Read this article and learn what NOT to do.

Bad Words! Writing More Effectively

Avoid These Common Errors

You've probably heard people say "Write what you know." But real life doesn't always translate to writing. Here are some things to avoid:

Pretentious Language/Jargon

In real life, people say things like, "I am of the opinion that...", and "Presently, the situation is thus that facilitating the augmentation of . . ." But just because people say things like this doesn't mean you need to actually write them. In fiction these words come across as pretentious.

Some other words/phrases that alert my Sixth Editor Sense:

ameliorate

such that

deceased

commence

facilitate

utilize

parameters

momentarily

Profanity

Curse words are fine . . . if you're using them in dialog, for the purpose of characterization. Remember that the effect the F-word has in real life (not much, these days) is exaggerated ten-fold in writing. Those words stand out! Use them wisely.
Filler Phrases

It goes without saying that . . . (If it goes without saying, don't say it. If you need to say it, then it doesn't go without saying.)

Such that . . . (You can substitute this gem with a smile of satisfaction and nothing else; it has virtually no meaning.)

In the case of . . . (This is seen in formal writing, but it doesn't belong in fiction narratives. A simple "if" works just as well.)

In the event of . . . (Again, try "if.")

Functioning in the capacity of . . . (What does this mean? If you can't answer that question in five seconds, take 'er out.)
Vocalized Pauses

Um, huh, hmm, er, etc.-like curse words, stand out like a slap in the face. And again, you can certainly use them, but be aware of the impact they have on your audience. One little "huh" will give the impression of confusion that will last for pages! If a character says ums on more than one page â€ well, your readers will assume he's not the sharpest tool in the shed.

It can be a challenge to write with an authentic voice, since many words and phrases we hear in real conversations don't convert 1:1 when written.

But you can still "write what you know." Don't let anything stop you from writing like crazy during that first draft. But during the revision process, do keep in mind the unintended effect that jargon, swear words, business mumbo-jumbo, and vocalized pauses may have.

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