

Writing Using Value-Added Words

April 2011 Newsletter

In many of the onsite workshops we teach, someone will have a question about a particular word or phrase and its usage. For instance, some participants will say that they dislike the word "that" and discourage its use, while others suggest that a writer "can't" begin a sentence with "and" or "but" and that "because" should "never" be used. All of this is, of course, baseless, as words and phrases in and of themselves are neither good nor bad.

Higher level, or critical, thinking about our writing means focusing instead on including only words that add value; that is, words that are essential to creating meaning. If we can delete words and the sentence has the same meaning, then those words probably add little or no value. Some good examples of this are

- "in order to" ("to" is a better choice)
- "due to the fact that" (because, since)
- "at this moment in time" (now)
- "merge/combine together" (combine or merge)
- "prior experience" ("experience")
- "in conjunction with" (and)

There are many more examples; however, the point is this: ask yourself

- Does every word add value?

If it doesn't, consider deleting it. Eliminating words that add no value can make your writing more concise, precise, and succinct, and all of us would agree that that's a good thing!

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