<u>Revisions Worksheet</u>

Began___/___ Finished___/___

Word Count: _____ to _____

Goal: The goal of this worksheet is not to eliminate all the words on it, but to make more deliberate word choices and recognize where you have cluttered the narrative or could be writing with more depth. There may be words here that you have no instances of or the right amount of use—consider those like the free spaces on Bingo. There may be words here that you have five hundred uses of, but each one serves a purpose, and you'll know you can skip them in the future.

The purpose of this worksheet is not to replace editors or copyeditors, but to help you reach farther with your own voice and choices and to get some of the work done ahead of time. You can dig deeper and find the right words.

How to Use: While this was designed to be used with Microsoft Word, I would assume other programs have similar "find" search capabilities. You need to become familiar with how to set parameters in your searches so you are finding all forms of that word, but not every word containing those letters—words such as "to" or "at" would make that a nightmare.

In Microsoft Word, there are two very useful settings: "whole words only" and "all forms of the word." Searching for "whole words only" will allow you to find "at," but not "bat," "attack," "that," and "sat." Searching for "all forms of the word" will find all forms of the verb "said" so you don't have to do separate searches for "saying" and "says." In many instances, you can just leave the default and get what you want. Searching for "breath" will get you the verb, noun, and adjective.

I've marked words that I believe you should probably use stricter parameters on in order to find everything and noted in places where you may wish to do a separate search to be certain you're finding everything.

WW: set your parameters to "whole words only"
AF: "all forms of the word"

This worksheet is organized in an order designed to take you from more expansive revisions to precise revisions. You'll go from revising paragraphs to punctuation. Hopefully, this will also prevent you from needing to make second passes on words.

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

Good luck and remember that natural dialogue is messy, and voice is still important. You do not need to fix everything. As your parent may have once said, "Make good choices."

Inexactness:

Here you will correct vague wording such as "it," "something," or "everyone" when the actual object of the action or a more specific term could be used. You will also target words like "seemed," "might," or "maybe" that are unnecessarily wishy-washy. Additionally, below are hesitating words like "almost," "nearly," or "probably"—when your character could commit to a feeling or action. These all create a layer of unnecessary distance between a character or object and an action.

Fixing this may require a simple swap or deletion, or rewriting the entire sentence or multiple sentences. Adding in more personalized actions or inner dialogue also might help. These words are markers that suggest you can dig deeper or say more.

Example: She seemed sort of hurt. It caused a sinking feeling in his chest. Things might not be going well. Maybe he should do something about it.

Fixed: Sonja's eyes filled with tears. A pressure in Kyle's chest grew. He'd screwed up. This date was a mess. She'd storm out of the restaurant if he didn't fix this.

Alternative fix: Test Subject 45 was hurt—a heavily-bleeding gash on her arm. Their latest testing protocol was too harsh. Greg sighed as she collapsed in the middle of the maze. He sent in a corpse drone.

Alternative fix: The activities coordinator pressed her hand against a shallow bite. "Swimming with Sharks Day" was a horrible plan. *Why did I support this idea?* "Medic! We need a medic!"

- about (unless dialect, remove instances of "about to") (_____ to _____)
- any / anything / anyone (_____ to _____) (search with a space before "any")
- could have (_____ to _____)
- every / everything / everyone (_____ to _____)
- guess (AF) (_____ to _____)
- it (WW) (_____ to _____) (This will be a brutal search.)
- its (WW) (_____ to _____) (While on this confirm you don't mean "it's.")
- kind of / kinda (_____ to _____)
- maybe (_____ to _____)
- might (_____ to _____)
- most (includes almost, mostly) (_____ to _____)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- nearly (_____ to _____)
- perhaps (_____ to _____)
- probably (_____ to _____)
- rather (_____ to _____)
- seem (_____ to _____) (confirm seems, seeming, and seemed in results)
- slightly (_____ to _____)
- some -thing / -what/ -how / -where / -one (_____ to _____)
- sort of /sorta (_____ to _____)
- stuff (_____ to _____)
- there (WW) (_____ to _____) (especially "there is/was")
- thing / things (_____ to _____)

Shallow Character Point of View:

These words are markers for when you could go deeper into a characters' motivation, but you've used telling instead of showing. This will typically require rewriting the sentence or paragraph with more exact actions or thoughts. This is where you really need to be certain you are finding all forms of these verbs. If you are purposefully using a shallow POV, you can skip this section.

Example: She felt used. His dismissal made the betrayal more personal. She needed more than this.

Fixed: That jerk. Trevor turned away from her—just like her father had. Holly deserved better than this.

Alternative fix: He'd taken credit for her work—after telling her it was mediocre. No. Amy deserved an explanation, and she would get it. Oh, yes, she would.

Alternative fix: Fired—and by him. Their relationship was hardly secret. Lydia would laugh when she heard. A hot shame filled Tanya, souring her stomach. She threw up brunch's lobster bisque on his desk.

- act (AF) (_____ to _____)
- assume (AF) (_____ to _____)
- believe (AF) (_____ to _____)
- cause (AF) (_____ to _____) (specifically "this caused/it caused")
- consider (AF) (_____ to _____)
- decide (AF) (_____ to _____)
- feel (AF) (_____ to _____) (confirm you have "felt" in your findings)
- find (AF) (_____ to _____) (specifically "he found himself thinking" etc.)
- hear (AF) (_____ to _____)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- hope (AF) (_____ to _____)
- imagine (AF) (_____ to _____)
- keep (AF) (_____ to _____) (specifically "they kept searching" etc.)
- know (AF) (_____ to _____) (esp. unnecessary "I know" in dialogue)
- make (AF) (_____ to _____)
- mean (AF) (_____ to _____)
- need (AF) (_____ to _____)
- notice (AF) (_____ to _____)
- realize (AF) (_____ to _____)
- recognize (AF) (_____ to _____)
- see (AF) (_____ to _____)
- suspect (AF) (_____ to _____) (confirm you have "is/was suspicious")
- tended to (WW) (_____ to _____)
- think (AF) (_____ to _____) (esp. unnecessary "I think" in dialogue)
- try (AF) (_____ to _____) (especially "trying to")
- understand (AF) (_____ to _____)
- want (_____ to _____)
- was (WW) (_____ to _____) (Or "is" if in present tense)
- watch (_____ to _____)
- wish (_____ to _____)
- wonder (AF) (_____ to _____)

Preposition Overuse:

Remember the kids' song where you add a prepositional phrase with each verse: "There's a bump on the log in the hole in the bottom of the sea"? This is where you stop doing that. Fixing this can be as simple as switching to a possessive form. "The keyhole in the door" becomes "the door's keyhole." It can also mean deleting unnecessary references. You often don't need to hand something "to him" if there are only two characters in a room. You don't need to reiterate your characters are "in front of" an object twenty times in the same scene. Additionally, you always stand "up" and sit "down" so the preposition is not needed. (You also reach "out," lay "down," climb "up," and wrinkle "up" your nose.)

Good rule of thumb is three or fewer prepositions per sentence.

Example: He stood up and moved to stand in front of the display on the screen in the center of the room.

Fixed: The captain stood, strode across the bridge, and gestured at the displayed enemy ship.

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

Alternative fix: The student body president stood and moved in front of the projector screen. Images from the Drivers' Ed. movie danced across his white shirt as he said, "I just got an alert. The zombies are here."

Alternative fix: Payson stood and walked in front of the never-ending HR presentation. "That's enough."

- across (_____ to _____)
- after (_____ to _____)
- against (_____ to _____)
- around (_____ to _____)
- at (WW) (_____ to _____)
- back / backed (_____ to _____)
- before (_____ to _____)
- behind (_____ to _____)
- between (_____ to _____)
- by (WW) (_____ to _____)
- down / downward (_____ to _____)
- during (_____ to _____)
- for (WW) (_____ to _____)
- from (_____ to _____)
- front (WW) (_____ to _____) (especially "in front of")
- in (WW) (_____ to _____)
- near / nearby (_____ to _____)
- neath (_____ to _____) (as in "underneath" and "beneath")
- of (WW) (_____ to _____)
- off (WW) (_____ to _____)
- on (WW) (_____ to _____)
- one of (_____ to _____) (this tends to be overused in group scenes)
- out (WW) (_____ to _____)
- through (and throughout) (_____ to _____)
- to (WW) (_____ to _____)
- under (WW) (_____ to _____)
- up (WW) (_____ to _____)
- with, within, without (_____ to _____)
- _____ (_____ to _____) (any other fave prepositions)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

o   _____ (_____ to _____)

Prepositions That Are Extra:

Maybe you already caught some of these up above, but you need to deal with the "wards." All of the directional prepositions ending in "ward" either have an "s" or don't, depending on where you're from. In the United States, the preferred spelling is without an "s" but if you love the "s"—just be consistent. Either way, confirm you don't have twenty directional "wards" in a paragraph by doing an unrestricted search on "ward." You'll yank in a few random words (like "wardrobe") but ignore them.

To S or to not S:

o   afterward, backward, downward, forward, inward, outward, toward, upward

Unnecessary Dialogue Tags (evaluate for deletion or action):

Despite what you learned in your formative years, getting creative with dialogue tags isn't necessary. You don't want your characters to warble, bleat, chirp, bellow, growl, squeak, shriek, or harangue all their words. When needed, using "said" or "ask" primarily is good, but swapping for actions to use as character attribution is better. (Note: you never have to remove every dialogue tag of any kind. You can keep a few of your grumbles or snarls. Find the best option and rely predominantly on "invisible" tags like "said" and "ask" or swap them for an action.)

If you want to be certain the emotion of the tag is present, shift it into the dialogue itself. Have your character's speech convey the tone.

Also, unless a verb is very clearly a dialogue tag, do not use it as one. Characters do not smile, sneer, nod, wink, or nudge dialogue. Example: "I'm happy," Chris smiled. (No! Bad writer!)

Yelling, screaming, and shouting should be used sparingly. Screaming words is difficult to do…as is actual yelling. Picture a poor audiobook reader having to shout, yell, or scream your dialogue—and, then, dial it back.

Example: "You are not the boss of me," Tim snarked.

Fixed: "You are not the boss of me." Tim slapped the decorative paperweight off the desk. It smashed into glass confetti, spraying both of them. Unfortunately for Tim, Samantha *was* the boss of him.

Alternative fix: "You're not in charge of me anymore, Rob. It made sense after dad passed, but you're just locked into it now. I'm an adult, and it's time to start treating me like one."

o   acknowledge (AF) (_____ to _____)

o   admit (_____ to _____)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- agree (_____ to _____)
- answer (AF) (_____ to _____)
- ask (AF) (_____ to _____)
- call (AF) (_____ to _____)
- complain (_____ to _____)
- confirm (_____ to _____)
- continue (AF) (_____ to _____)
- explain (_____ to _____)
- grumble (AF) (_____ to _____)
- hiss (AF) (_____ to _____) (Can this be hissed? Hint: Almost always no.)
- murmur (_____ to _____)
- question (_____ to _____)
- reply (AF) (_____ to _____)
- respond (AF) (_____ to _____)
- say (AF) (_____ to _____) (may need "ask" if dialogue is a question)
- scream (_____ to _____) (evaluate for overuse or appropriateness)
- shout (_____ to _____) (evaluate for overuse or appropriateness)
- state (_____ to _____)
- tell (AF) (_____ to _____)
- whisper (_____ to _____) (evaluate for validity in scene and overuse)
- yell (_____ to _____) (evaluate for overuse or appropriateness)
- _____ (_____ to _____) (your favorite dialogue tag)
- _____ (_____ to _____)

Adverbs, Conjunctions, and Conjunctive Adverbs:

Primarily this is to catch overuse of words such as "so," "but, and "lately" especially if you're beginning sentences with them. You can also decide whether different punctuation is warranted.

This can be an opportunity to sharpen individual character's voices. Perhaps one of your characters would use the word "however" while another never would. Maybe one of your characters has run-on sentences with multiple "ands" or the opposite—short tight sentences with no conjunctions.

You should also reflect on whether you need some of these words. Does "suddenly" add anything? Are you listing actions and need a random "then" in there?

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Some of these you may only be using as adverbs, but it's still good to eyeball them hard to see if they're pulling their weight. By the way, adverb repetition (like "very, very cold") seems necessary to convey emotions or intensity, but it's overused. Choose wisely with repetition.

This section is to make your choices regarding voice, grammar, and punctuation more deliberate. Fix other things you see as you pass through.
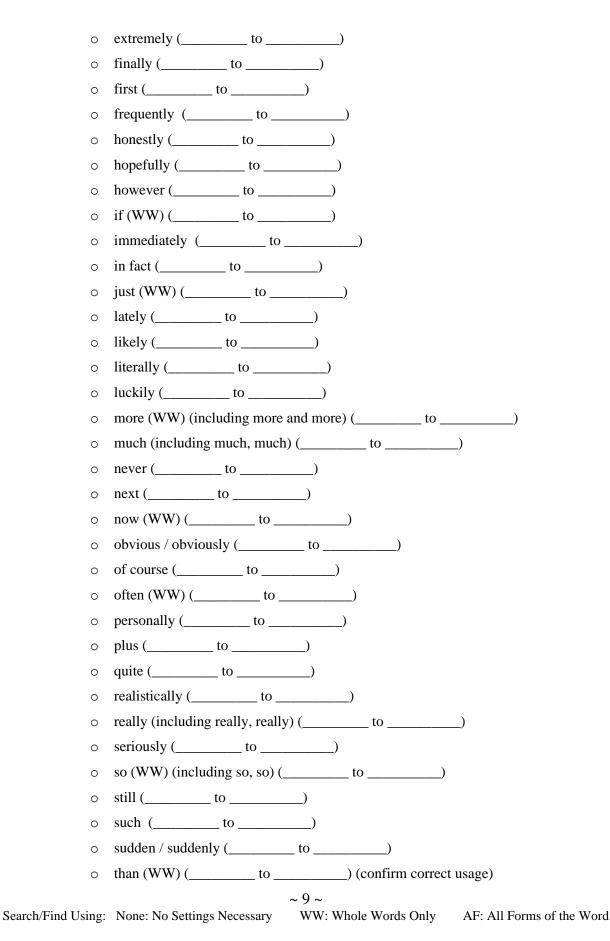
Example #1: Also, he was coming, and that was very, very final, and it was happening; therefore, there was really nothing to be done. (My eyelid twitched while creating this example. I'm so sorry.)

Fixed: Josh was coming. Their confrontation was inevitable. Destiny led them here. Where were his nunchucks?
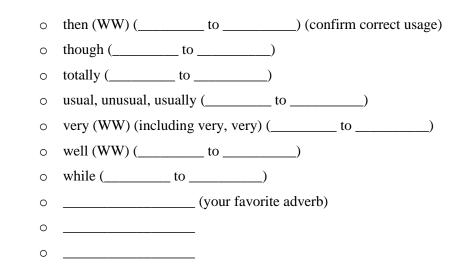
Example #2: Suddenly, it was time to go. She was so, so late. After seeing the time, she gathered her purse, patted the dog's head, and, then, she ran out the door.

Fixed: *Is that the time?* Tori grabbed her leather satchel, patted Bongo's head, and bolted out the door.

- absolutely (_____ to _____)
- actually (_____ to _____)
- additionally (_____ to _____)
- admittedly (_____ to _____)
- again (WW) (_____ to _____) (especially "again and again")
- already (_____ to _____)
- also (_____ to _____)
- always (_____ to _____)
- and (WW) (_____ to _____) (esp. "And," but also run-on sentences)
- anyway (_____ to _____)
- as (WW) (_____ to _____)
- away (_____ to _____)
- basically (_____ to _____)
- because (_____ to _____)
- both (WW) (_____ to _____) (confirm this refers to 2 choices/subjects)
- but (WW) (_____ to _____) (especially "But,")
- definitely (_____ to _____)
- especially (_____ to _____)
- even (WW) (_____ to _____)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- extremely (_____ to _____)
- finally (_____ to _____)
- first (_____ to _____)
- frequently (_____ to _____)
- honestly (_____ to _____)
- hopefully (_____ to _____)
- however (_____ to _____)
- if (WW) (_____ to _____)
- immediately (_____ to _____)
- in fact (_____ to _____)
- just (WW) (_____ to _____)
- lately (_____ to _____)
- likely (_____ to _____)
- literally (_____ to _____)
- luckily (_____ to _____)
- more (WW) (including more and more) (_____ to _____)
- much (including much, much) (_____ to _____)
- never (_____ to _____)
- next (_____ to _____)
- now (WW) (_____ to _____)
- obvious / obviously (_____ to _____)
- of course (_____ to _____)
- often (WW) (_____ to _____)
- personally (_____ to _____)
- plus (_____ to _____)
- quite (_____ to _____)
- realistically (_____ to _____)
- really (including really, really) (_____ to _____)
- seriously (_____ to _____)
- so (WW) (including so, so) (_____ to _____)
- still (_____ to _____)
- such (_____ to _____)
- sudden / suddenly (_____ to _____)
- than (WW) (_____ to _____) (confirm correct usage)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- then (WW) (_____ to _____) (confirm correct usage)
- though (_____ to _____)
- totally (_____ to _____)
- usual, unusual, usually (_____ to _____)
- very (WW) (including very, very) (_____ to _____)
- well (WW) (_____ to _____)
- while (_____ to _____)
- _____ (your favorite adverb)
- _____
- _____

Delaying Action Words:

These are words writers pepper throughout their manuscripts to indicate action is about to start, and I don't know why we do this as writers. I use them all the time. They're the vestigial organs of writing that are left over from rough drafts. "Starting to" is basically your appendix. They're weird filler words that add no meaning, but you use them to move along the narrative. Cut them now—rip out that appendix.

Example #1: Gloria was going to go to the store and begin shopping. She was starting to run low on ingredients like peppers. (Note: you NEVER want "going to go" in a final draft. It's shameful.)
Fixed: Gloria left the bungalow and rushed to the corner bodega. She'd used the last pepper and wanted to spice up the evening—in so many ways.

Example #2: Harold was beginning to regret starting this revision while using this worksheet.
Fixed: Harold regretted all his life choices up to this point, including using this worksheet.

- begin (AF) (_____ to _____)
- fixing to (_____ to _____) (unless important to dialect)
- go (AF) / "going to" / "go and" / "went to" (_____ to _____)
- start (including "started to") (_____ to _____)

Odds and End:

I have no idea where to stick these words, but you're overusing them—especially "that." People or intelligent beings (if sci-fi or fantasy) get a "who/whom" not "that." In regards to whether it should be

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"that" or "which"—if you're using commas around the phrase, it should typically be "which" but the internet is full of tutorials on this.

"Sound" being used as a noun, verb, adverb, etc. makes it ripe for overuse.

"Like" will be another nightmare because it can be used in so many ways. Try to minimize the amount of times you use it casually and unnecessarily.

On "had" and the past perfect tense: this gets flagged by editors frequently as being awkward and/or unnecessary. Example: "She had drawn a lousy card during the game" could switch to: "she drew a lousy card during the game." If you have questions about this, this may be another situation where you brush up through the internet, or you could let your editors pry them from your cold dead fingers like I do.

Example #1: A snap sounded. "Did you hear that sound? It sounds like I broke it. I'm sick of fixing things. Another hour under an engine sounds awful."

Fixed: *Snap!* "Dang it! I overtightened the bolt. It's broken." Jenny groaned. "I did *not* want to spend another hour under this engine."

Example #2: They probably had only moments left before the entire base blew up. The minutes ticked away that they had left. "Just a minute," Chloe pointed, "we can still stop that countdown."

Fixed: The blasted self-destruct timer ticked away. *2:13. Now, 2:01.* They were doomed. Chloe gasped. "We can still stop the countdown if you know the override to unlock this switch."

- differ/ different/ differently (_____ to _____)
- either/or, neither/nor (confirm you are using the right secondary word)
- end (WW) (_____ to _____) (look for overuse, multiple use)
- enough (_____ to _____)
- had + past participle of verb (WW) (past perfect) (_____ to _____)
- had had (this reads like a typo, so try to reword if possible)
- like (AF) / liked (_____ to _____)
- minute (_____ to _____)
- moment (_____ to _____)
- not (WW) (_____ to _____) (Primarily looking for double negatives.)
- second (_____ to _____)
- sound (_____ to _____)
- that (WW) (change to "which" / "who" when necessary) (_____ to _____)
- this (WW) (_____ to _____)

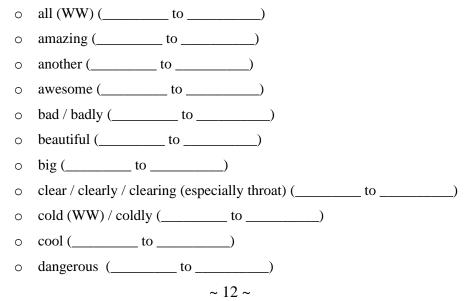Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- time (_____ to _____)
- too (WW) (_____ to _____)
- which (_____ to _____)
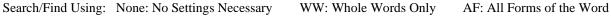- who / __whom (confirm you're using the right word)

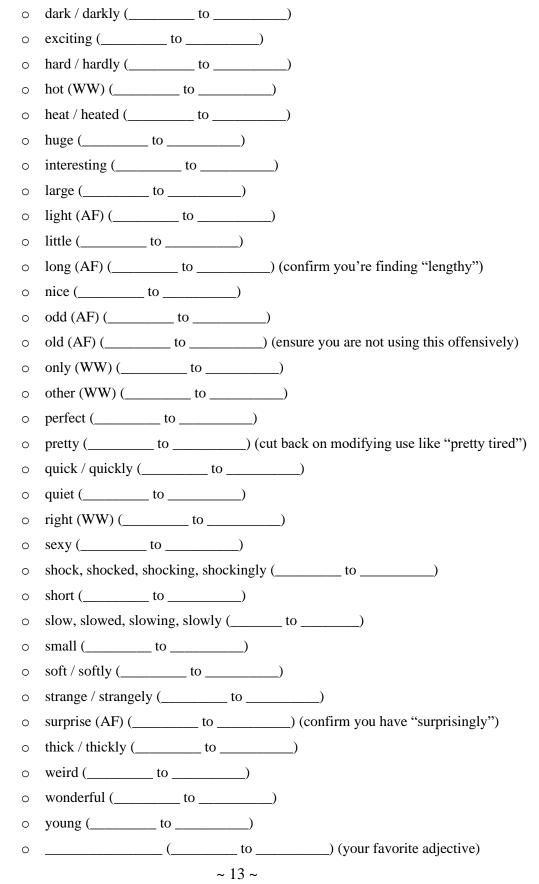## Overused Adjectives and Other words:

I understand the desire to really paint a picture, but multiple adjectives are not always the way. Additionally, some of these you probably overuse. (I'm looking at you, "dark.") Drag out your thesaurus and find more descriptive words. You also may want to evaluate whether multiple adjectives need commas. If you can stick the word "and" between them, without it sounding bizarre, then you can stick a comma in there. I won't post my thoughts on the Oxford serial comma here (Oxford commas forever, baby!) but watch for that too. This will also give you the chance to knock out a few more overused adverbs too. I've noted a few adverbs that I suspect you'll want to cut back on.

While there is a section below this for problematic words, as you go through these words, evaluate how you're using them and the implications of using them with specific characters.

Example: The large and spacious cave held many small creatures making odd, sort of eerie noises in the dark.

Fixed: As we strode through the vast cave, unseen creatures skittered in the deep shadows. Claws scraped against stone, and wings beat against walls. We were surrounded. I shivered—and not from the chill in the air.

- all (WW) (_____ to _____)
- amazing (_____ to _____)
- another (_____ to _____)
- awesome (_____ to _____)
- bad / badly (_____ to _____)
- beautiful (_____ to _____)
- big (_____ to _____)
- clear / clearly / clearing (especially throat) (_____ to _____)
- cold (WW) / coldly (_____ to _____)
- cool (_____ to _____)
- dangerous (_____ to _____)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- o   dark / darkly (_____ to _____)
- o   exciting (_____ to _____)
- o   hard / hardly (_____ to _____)
- o   hot (WW) (_____ to _____)
- o   heat / heated (_____ to _____)
- o   huge (_____ to _____)
- o   interesting (_____ to _____)
- o   large (_____ to _____)
- o   light (AF) (_____ to _____)
- o   little (_____ to _____)
- o   long (AF) (_____ to _____) (confirm you're finding "lengthy")
- o   nice (_____ to _____)
- o   odd (AF) (_____ to _____)
- o   old (AF) (_____ to _____) (ensure you are not using this offensively)
- o   only (WW) (_____ to _____)
- o   other (WW) (_____ to _____)
- o   perfect (_____ to _____)
- o   pretty (_____ to _____) (cut back on modifying use like "pretty tired")
- o   quick / quickly (_____ to _____)
- o   quiet (_____ to _____)
- o   right (WW) (_____ to _____)
- o   sexy (_____ to _____)
- o   shock, shocked, shocking, shockingly (_____ to _____)
- o   short (_____ to _____)
- o   slow, slowed, slowing, slowly (_____ to _____)
- o   small (_____ to _____)
- o   soft / softly (_____ to _____)
- o   strange / strangely (_____ to _____)
- o   surprise (AF) (_____ to _____) (confirm you have "surprisingly")
- o   thick / thickly (_____ to _____)
- o   weird (_____ to _____)
- o   wonderful (_____ to _____)
- o   young (_____ to _____)
- o   _____ (_____ to _____) (your favorite adjective)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- _____ (_____ to _____)

Repetitive Actions: (Confirm you're finding all tenses of these words)
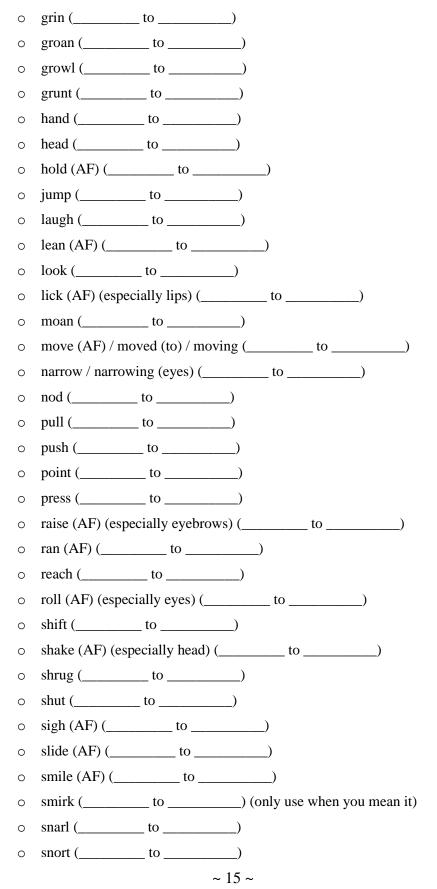
Minimize repetition wherever possible. Also, I'm including specific body parts to do searches for so you're not using "hand" fifty times in the same paragraph.
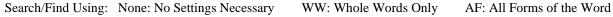
If you have over-the-top actions like chuckling, chortling, guffawing, or waggling of eyebrows, consider cutting them. Readers will run into a word like that and get hung up on it. Also, in regards to laughing, make certain you save laughter for when it'll add something—otherwise you've given a laugh track to your narrative that'll subdue actual humor. Finally, smirk has a negative connotation to it for many readers—keep that in mind when you use it. Some readers see it as mocking and hateful.
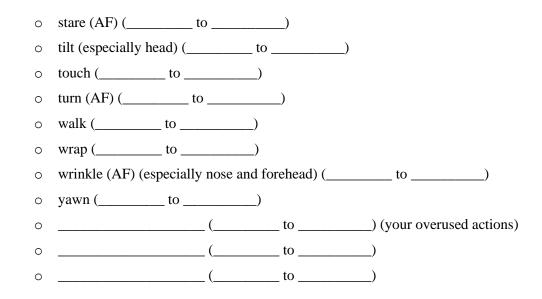
Example: William gave her a drink, and she laughed at the tacky umbrella. "I haven't seen one of these since that trip to the islands. Remember how we both nearly lost our shoes in that game of poker?" They both laughed at the memory. She blinked back tears of laughter. She couldn't breathe when she thought of how great it had been.

Fixed: Her drink had a magenta umbrella with toucans on it. She could see from William's smirk that he remembered *that one trip.* "That was wild," she said, trying not smile. "Next time you let me ante up with the shoes off our feet, make sure I'm holding something better than a pair of eights and a belly full of frothy pink drinks."

- bite (AF) (especially lips) (_____ to _____)
- blink (_____ to _____)
- breath (_____ to _____)
- brush (_____ to _____)
- close (AF) (closing eyes, doors, drawing closer) (_____ to _____)
- cough (_____ to _____)
- draw (AF) (draw attention/weapon or movement of people/air) (_____ to _____)
- eye(s) (_____ to _____)
- frown (_____ to _____)
- gaze (AF) (_____ to _____)
- gesture (AF) (_____ to _____)
- glance (AF) (_____ to _____)
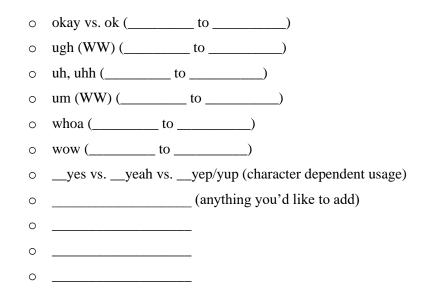- glare (AF) (_____ to _____)
- grab (_____ to _____)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- grin (_____ to _____)
- groan (_____ to _____)
- growl (_____ to _____)
- grunt (_____ to _____)
- hand (_____ to _____)
- head (_____ to _____)
- hold (AF) (_____ to _____)
- jump (_____ to _____)
- laugh (_____ to _____)
- lean (AF) (_____ to _____)
- look (_____ to _____)
- lick (AF) (especially lips) (_____ to _____)
- moan (_____ to _____)
- move (AF) / moved (to) / moving (_____ to _____)
- narrow / narrowing (eyes) (_____ to _____)
- nod (_____ to _____)
- pull (_____ to _____)
- push (_____ to _____)
- point (_____ to _____)
- press (_____ to _____)
- raise (AF) (especially eyebrows) (_____ to _____)
- ran (AF) (_____ to _____)
- reach (_____ to _____)
- roll (AF) (especially eyes) (_____ to _____)
- shift (_____ to _____)
- shake (AF) (especially head) (_____ to _____)
- shrug (_____ to _____)
- shut (_____ to _____)
- sigh (AF) (_____ to _____)
- slide (AF) (_____ to _____)
- smile (AF) (_____ to _____)
- smirk (_____ to _____) (only use when you mean it)
- snarl (_____ to _____)
- snort (_____ to _____)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- stare (AF) (_____ to _____)
- tilt (especially head) (_____ to _____)
- touch (_____ to _____)
- turn (AF) (_____ to _____)
- walk (_____ to _____)
- wrap (_____ to _____)
- wrinkle (AF) (especially nose and forehead) (_____ to _____)
- yawn (_____ to _____)
- _____ (_____ to _____) (your overused actions)
- _____ (_____ to _____)
- _____ (_____ to _____)

Casual Words:

Is your character the type of person to say "everybody" or "everyone"?

How is your character doing? Are they "fine" or "very well" or something else?

Okay or ok? (Be consistent.) Whoa or woah? (Whoa is standard.) All right or alright? (Can vary from character to character in my opinion, but could be house style in publishing.) Be aware that some words become compound when an adjective. Example: You say "good night," but you give goodnight kisses.

- all right vs. alright
- anybody / anyone __ everybody / everyone __nobody/no one __somebody/someone
- ew (WW) vs. eww (_____ to _____) (be consistent)
- fine (WW) (_____ to _____)
- good (_____ to _____)
- great (_____ to _____) (over-usage or character dependent usage)
- hah (_____ to _____)
- hey __ hi __ hello
- hm vs. hmm (my preference: use hm for acknowledgement, more if humming)
- huh (_____ to _____)
- mm (WW) vs. mmm (I use mm for agreement, mmm for yum/passion)
- no vs. __nah vs. __nope
- no idea (_____ to _____)
- oh (WW) (_____ to _____)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

- okay vs. ok (_____ to _____)
- ugh (WW) (_____ to _____)
- uh, uhh (_____ to _____)
- um (WW) (_____ to _____)
- whoa (_____ to _____)
- wow (_____ to _____)
- __yes vs. __yeah vs. __yep/yup (character dependent usage)
- _____ (anything you'd like to add)
- _____
- _____
- _____

Problematic Words

I won't include all the words here that might be offensive—there are too many. Also, I won't claim I know all the ways words can be hurtful or offensive, especially as some can seem innocuous before they're pointed out. Shaming, hate, and bias can be both subtle and overt. Body shaming can be found in your one sentence description of a side character, even if that one sentence uses the word "thin." You might have described skin color, hair, or eye shape in a cringey way. Your character has said, "This is crazy good," when you could just as easily use "fantastic" or "delicious." You might be using "dirty" to describe someone in a way that plays into stereotypes or hate.

If you have possibly offensive content and this an iffy area for your book or experience, consider hiring a sensitivity reader or using an editor specializing in this.

In regards to the gendering section: one way to avoid unintentional sexism or exclusion is to not gender when it's not necessary. The unpleasant shop owner who yells at your protagonist can be better described than just "woman" for the sentences they're on the page. The fisherman can be referred to as something other than "old man." Try not to rely on stereotypes to replace doing the work.

In particular, villains should be as fully-fleshed out as your other characters. Their primary attributes should not be an ethnicity, a mental health condition, a body type, an identity, a disability, a class, or a life-style. (For the love of all that is good in the world, stop linking mental health conditions to evil.)

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

Is the "rep" in your book an accurate portrayal and part of a three-dimensional character or is it essentially their character and a plot point or a conflict? Be more deliberate and aware in characterization and remember that leaving some things open to interpretation or using other descriptors is a better route. Authors commonly when approached about these choices will get defensive saying, "It was my character saying this, not me." This is your chance to get ahead and choose differently before someone asks you to defend it. You can quietly kill it before an editor or reader points it out to you. Assume using problematic words or phrases may not age well. In ten years, readers may pull something from your backlist and say, "I loved this story until…"

With any of these, there may be times when using these words *is* right for your story, especially if you have accurate rep of someone who is blind, for example. Skip those words. This is for you to take a second look for phrases such as "blind leading the blind" or "on deaf ears" and find another choice.

If this is an "own voices" book (and I say this from experience,) you might want to recognize that humanity is a wide spectrum of experiences and yours is just one. You might use a term for yourself that others might find hurtful. Ask others in your community their feelings on it.

Be purposeful in your words.

- o __blind __deaf __dumb __lame __idiot __moron __freak __spaz
- o __crazy __insane __psycho __mental
- o dirty __filthy __nasty __ugly
- o evil (you could be showing this, rather than saying this)
- o __female __male __woman __man (necessary usage of "gendering"?)
- o gendering occupational titles (waitress, postman, stewardess, etc.)
- o racial or cultural identity capitalization (ex: Black, Deaf, etc.)
- o body descriptions (go back and read over any descriptions of characters)
- o stereotypes (have you leaned into any stereotypes?)
- o consent (is there clear consent between individuals where intended?)
- o _____ (anything you would like to track and confirm)
- o _____
- o _____

Finicky:

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

Here we are to the last little bit where it gets finicky. If you consistently swap out "rein" for "reign" add it at the end. If principle and principal are your problem, add them. Bare and bear? That could make for some fun times, but still add them below.

- affect / __effect
- blond/blonde
- cancelled (canceled) __levelled __travelled __unravelled (one 'L' only in US)
- grey / gray (pick one and be consistent – gray is US preferred)
- horde (a group of people) hoard (treasured belongings or hoarding)
- insure (should be "ensure" unless related to insurance)
- leach (to drain) / leech (a bug)
- lie vs. lay
- _____ (your personal finicky issues)
- _____
- _____

Punctuation:

Punctuation can be up to preference, so just be certain that you're committed to defending all your exclamation points, ellipses, em dashes, and semicolons. Remember, ellipses indicate missing words or a hesitation in speech or thought. Em dashes are used for when a thought or speech are interrupted or for emphasis. Try to limit the amount of questions in a row so your characters don't sound like they're on an episode of *Jeopardy*. When doing your searches for punctuation, you can usually just copy and paste the punctuation into the search box.

- Exclamation points (_____ to _____)
- Ellipses (_____ to _____) (confirm spacing between periods is consistent)
- Em Dashes (_____ to _____)
- Question Marks (_____ to _____)
- Semicolons (_____ to _____)

Congratulations!

You have completed this worksheet! The world is yours.

Search/Find Using: None: No Settings Necessary   WW: Whole Words Only   AF: All Forms of the Word

Actually, your next step should be to read your manuscript through, possibly even aloud. This process may result in paragraphs needing better segues between them. Additionally, I found it easier to see plot holes and mistakes in action afterward. Also, some of the actions you swapped out for dialogue tags may not fit with the position of the character's bodies in the scene. Read it again straight through to smooth it. Good luck!

If you found this worksheet useful, let me know on Twitter @WendySparrow or send me a note through my website www.WendySparrow.com . If you curse my name for putting you through this, well, you can just keep that to yourself.

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