

Part VII: Diction

The “Online Exercise” icons in Part VII of the handbook refer to the following exercises.

Note: There is also an “Omnibus Review of Sentence Errors and Weaknesses” (covering Parts II-VII) at the end of this document.

Exercise 59: Slang (see section #63a)

List as many slang terms as you can think of for each of the following. Which are current in your vocabulary? Which, if any, would you consider using in an academic essay? In a letter to a friend? In a letter to a parent, uncle, or aunt?

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. criminal (n.) | 5. very good | 9. police officer |
| 2. intoxicated | 6. talk (v.) | 10. beautiful |
| 3. cheat (v.) | 7. sweetheart | 11. food |
| 4. court (v.) | 8. man | 12. inspiring |

Exercise 60: Informal, Colloquial (see section #63b)

Provide formal substitutes for each of the slang or informal terms below. Use your dictionary or thesaurus as necessary. Then compose sentences for at least ten of the listed terms, using them in ways that you think would be acceptable in relatively formal writing.

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|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. bawl out | 11. jock | 21. monkey business |
| 2. bellyache (vb. and n.) | 12. cute | 22. on the spot |
| 3. cheapskate | 13. ditch | 23. scrounge |
| 4. chintzy | 14. down the tube | 24. slapdash |
| 5. chump | 15. face the music | 25. southpaw |
| 6. con (vb.) | 16. fall guy | 26. egghead |
| 7. conniption | 17. high and mighty | 27. shocker |
| 8. cook up | 18. hoot | 28. up the creek |
| 9. crackdown | 19. hunch | |
| 10. crummy | 20. miss out | |

Exercise 61: “Fine Writing” (see section #63c)

For each of the following words, provide one or more equivalents that are less formal and more natural. Use your dictionary or thesaurus as necessary. Which of these words do you recognize but not use yourself? Which do you consider to be in your working vocabulary? Mark any that you think should not necessarily be avoided as pretentious or overly formal in a non-academic context.

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. ablutions | 6. collation | 11. confabulate |
| 2. assiduity | 7. colloquy | 12. conflagration |
| 3. bellicose | 8. comminatory | 13. contumelious |
| 4. cachinnation | 9. compotation | 14. crepuscular |
| 5. circumambient | 10. concatenation | 15. defenestration |

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 16. divagation | 30. lucubrations | 44. repast |
| 17. doff | 31. matutinal | 45. rubicund |
| 18. egress | 32. mentation | 46. salubrious |
| 19. eleemosynary | 33. objurcation | 47. sartorial |
| 20. equitation | 34. obloquy | 48. serendipitous |
| 21. erstwhile | 35. oppugnant | 49. sesquipedalian |
| 22. frangible | 36. orthography | 50. superincumbent |
| 23. gustatory | 37. otiose | 51. tenebrous |
| 24. habiliments | 38. pellucid | 52. transpontine |
| 25. hebdomadal | 39. penurious | 53. vilipend |
| 26. impudicity | 40. peregrinations | 54. visage |
| 27. ineluctable | 41. propinquity | 55. veridical |
| 28. jejune | 42. raison d'être | 56. Weltanschauung |
| 29. lubricity | 43. rebarbative | |

Exercise 62 (1): Concrete and Abstract Diction (see section #65a) / Weak Generalizations (see section #65b)

For each of the following words, supply several increasingly specific terms; take at least a few all the way to a single specific item.

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|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. car | 7. drink (n.) | 13. see |
| 2. art | 8. people | 14. moved |
| 3. answered | 9. mythical thing | 15. concept |
| 4. said | 10. entertainment | 16. freedom |
| 5. food | 11. creature | 17. music |
| 6. drink (vb.) | 12. structure | |

Next, compose a paragraph in which you use one or two of these seventeen general terms in the first sentence and develop your idea by using increasingly specific terms.

Exercise 62 (2): Concrete and Abstract Diction / Weak Generalizations

Rewrite the following vague and abstract paragraph from a letter of application for an entry-level research position at a community newspaper. The ad for the position called for details of the applicant's educational and employment experience, so in your revision, try to make the paragraph sharp and vivid by supplying concrete and specific details wherever suitable.

My education and job experience make me a good person to work in your organization. At university, I have been studying courses in arts and science, and I have done quite a bit of research and writing of various things along the way. I have worked as a volunteer in my community, and over the years, I have been employed in three jobs that have given me good experience working in a busy office setting.

Exercise 63: Connotation and Denotation (see section #66)

Label each of the following words as having an unfavourable (u), neutral (n), or favourable (f) connotation; it might help if you place the words in each group on a scale running from *u* to *f*. Explain cases where you think some could be labelled more than one way, depending on context. Use your dictionary if necessary.

1. artless crass dense foolish green ignorant inept ingenuous innocent naive obtuse shallow unsophisticated unthinking
2. bony gaunt lanky lean rawboned scrawny skinny slender slight slim spare spindly svelte thin trim twiggy underweight
3. artful clever crafty cunning devious diplomatic foxy greasy guileful insinuating oily scheming slimy slippery sly smooth suave tricky unctuous wily
4. arrogance assurance audacity boldness brass brazenness cheek chutzpah effrontery gall highhandedness impertinence impudence insolence nerve pride presumption temerity
5. bookworm brain brainworker egghead genius highbrow intellectual mind pedant sage savant scholar smarty thinker

Exercise 64: Euphemism (see section #67)

Supply more straightforward equivalents for the following terms.

1. job action, work stoppage _____
2. revenue enhancement _____
3. repeat offender _____
4. correctional facility _____
5. surveillance satellites _____
6. in custody _____
7. memorial chapel; memorial park _____
8. untruth _____
9. friendly fire _____
10. indisposed _____
11. weather event _____

Exercise 65: Wrong Word (see section #68)

Correct the wrong words in the following sentences.

1. The conference is intended to focus attention on the problems facing our effluent society.
2. The performance of our local orchestra was spirited and bombastic.
3. The company's representatives claimed to be authoritarians on the subject.
4. Politicians try to maintain an impressionable image in the eyes of the public.
5. We tried to convince her that her fear was entirely imaginative.
6. Some shoppers stopped buying coffee because they found the price so absorbent, if not gastronomical.
7. The premier of Alberta led his party to the best of his possibilities.
8. He was deciduously on the wrong track with that theory.
9. It was an incredulous display of manual dexterity.
10. The cat was very expansive, weighing over twenty pounds.
11. It was oblivious that good coaching was responsible for the team's success.
12. Having an ice cream cone for dessert was an especial treat for the little boy.
13. Her acceptance of the job was made on the bases of her research and her feelings about the people she met at the interview.
14. The doctors were afraid that the accident victim's injuries would prove to be fatalistic.
15. The professor instructed the student in the usage of the new software.

Exercise 66: Idiom (see section #69)

Correct the unidiomatic usages in the following sentences.

1. She has an unusual philosophy towards modern technology.
2. He suggested me to use this new product.
3. Last summer I was bestowed with a scrawny, mangy mutt.
4. Desdemona had unquestioning faith of Iago's character.

5. Tanya made us to laugh with stories of her adventures in the Yukon.
6. The analysis is weak because it lacks in specific details.
7. I am amazed with the report's suggestions.
8. Lovers and poets create dream worlds in which only they can inhabit.
9. Ironically, although Huck fails, Tom succeeds to free Jim.
10. The generation gap between them is evident by their uneasiness of each other's boredom.
11. We discussed about climate change.
12. The class emphasized on mathematics skills.
13. They are excited in introducing the new product to their customers.
14. He was proud for being given the opportunity for welcoming the CEO to the branch office.

Exercise 67 (1): Wordiness (see section #70a) / Repetition (see section #70b) / Redundancy (see section #70c)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate wordiness.

1. Nature is a very strong, powerful image in this poem.
2. The courses being offered today require much more research and thought rather than the age-old memory work that used to plague the education system not too long a time ago.
3. These were the very things that caused him his puzzlement and his bafflement.
4. Advances in developments of modern information technology greatly contribute to making the equipment necessary for computerization of machinery more and more feasible for potential users.
5. Since he has both positive and negative qualities of human nature, Othello is far from perfect and has many faults.
6. Her confidence in expressing her views caused her to develop her faith in herself, which added to her visible strength.
7. The president and the prime minister both shared that view of the foreseeable future.
8. Another device used by the playwright was one of repetition.
9. There were two hundred people outside the auditorium, pressing against the ropes.

10. In the past six months I have been subjected to moving from two locations to other surroundings.
11. One cause for the farmer's concern was that he saw hardly any bees pollinating his crops, and that was really worrying him.
12. It's important, at this point in time, that we make a decision in order to get the project done on time and on schedule.
13. It has come to my attention over the past while that some employees, but not all, have been working through their lunch hour break time.

Exercise 67 (2): Wordiness / Repetition / Redundancy

Often one can save many words by combining two or more drafted sentences. Try doing this with each of the following excerpts, from students' drafts; cut all the wordiness you can while you're at it.

1. Also, parents who wish to see a game live but do not want to be disturbed by their children have no choice except to leave them attended at home. In this case, the parents would have to hire a babysitter. As a result, the parents end up paying the babysitter as well as for the game.
2. At soccer practice, our coach would single out the players who had the least team spirit. An example of this would be the passing drills in practices. The players who lagged behind on the field would be asked to run laps after practice.
3. There are a surprising number of lawyers and stockbrokers playing the game. This may be because these people must thrive on strategic planning to be in those professions in the first place. [And see *gr* in Appendix 2.]

Exercise 68: Redundancy (see section #70c)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate redundancy.

1. If enough food cannot be supplied for all the people in the world, humankind will have to deal with hunger, starvation, and widespread famine.
2. He is adventurous in that he likes a challenge and is willing to try new experiences, but he is not adventurous to the point of insanity, though.
3. Looking ahead into the future, the economist sees even less rapid growth in Canada's national economy.
4. She approached the door with feelings of fear and dread.
5. Golding's *Lord of the Flies* concerns a group of young children, all boys, who revert back to savagery.

6. If one doesn't thoroughly examine every part of the subject fully, one is almost sure to miss something that could be vitally important.
7. Most people would rather flee away from danger than face it squarely.
8. Carol soon realized that she had to make a careful outline first, before she could expect an essay to be well organized.
9. She told him in exact and precise terms just what she thought of him.
10. The singer in the film does not fit the stereotyped image of a musician.
11. The young, pre-school children were delighted by the visit of the storyteller to their pre-school.
12. The store had a vast and large selection of items for every customer of any age.
13. A great deal of research covering a lot of sources was necessary before the proposal could be completed and finished by the date it was due.
14. Once she had finished the novel and completed the story, she reflected and thought about how the author's theme related and applied to her own life and situation.
15. Traveling to different locations in the world and visiting various countries and cities is an experience that can change your life forever and affect your life in the future.

Part VII Review: Diction

Revise the following sentences to strengthen the diction and normalize the usage; correct any other errors you find, as well.

1. They discussed the role of the psychiatrist in athlete motivation.
2. The team comprises a close-knit unit that functions on a collective basis.
3. Strategy-wise, we want to position union members in an advantageous situation.
4. Because this particular word occurs frequently throughout the course of the play, it achieves a certain importance.
5. In the winter even less tourist dollars are spent.
6. Her striving to be a perfectionist was evident in her business.
7. Hopefully, this weekend's events will turn out to be successful.
8. He was ignorant as to the proper use of the tools.

9. As is so often the case, one type of error leads to another.
10. This passage is a very essential one in the novel.
11. His metaphors really bring out a sinister feeling which one feels while reading it.
12. Eliot sees his poetry as occupying a kind of niche in a long conveyer belt of accumulated knowledge and poetry.
13. She has him literally at her beckon call.
14. He found himself in a powerless situation.
15. I resolved to do my best in terms of making friends and working hard.
16. The hulls of the tankers were ripped open in a majority of cases, dumping countless barrels of oil into the sea.
17. Hamlet spends the whole play trying to reach a situation where he can revenge his father's death.
18. This poem is concerned with the fact that one should grasp an opportunity quickly.
19. He is only in town on a once-in-a-while basis.
20. The prime minister is waiting for the premiers to show their bottom lines.
21. As she gave me so much money I thanked her profusely.
22. The deal may not have gone ahead if Anderson hadn't been so patient and persistent.
23. People in watching these shows or movies may develop a love for violence as a result of watching this type of program.
24. This man thought it was incumbent upon him to extract revenge.
25. In Olympic sports nationalism is increasingly becoming a more important factor.
26. She saw that this was the last remaining remnant of a very, very important species.
27. For more than a million Canadians, back pain is an incapacitating experience which slows ordinary movements and turns routine tasks into tortuous events.
28. We are all intensely involved in profiting on the expenses of other people.
29. The contribution of the coalition to the passage of the legislation was capitalized on by the opposition.

30. He is as equally at ease hobnobbing with celebrities as he is relaxing in his own home.
31. These instructions are contingent to your acceptance.
32. The prime minister's reply, he complained, was "warm and gratuitous but not very specific."
33. Iago is regarded by all as an honest, truthful man.
34. The character of Nicholas is recognizable to people who really exist in the world.
35. Thanks to your financial commitment, an alternate to on-air fundraising is possible.
36. This book about a politician will have a negative effect in terms of the interests of his opponents.
37. The premier has tried to pressurize the legislature to go along with her proposals.
38. After going only a hundred miles the ship was forced to return to its point of origination.
39. You'll also be amazed, too, at our low prices on basic apparel.
40. The new program will cost in the realm of five million dollars.
41. You can expect similar-type amounts of precipitation over the long weekend.
42. The minister said that she would not want to be categorized with respect to a reply to that statement.
43. There was a general consensus in the neighbourhood that ambulance service in the area was frequently inadequate regarding response time.
44. Today, environmentalists are trying to substitute the word "buy" with the word "recycle."
45. We have to reconsider the proposal in terms of the legal aspects of that situation.
46. I was playing my typical type of game.
47. It seems like he is rather mad at her for daring to try and deceive him.
48. Frodo continuously fretted about the Ring.
49. I denote a real sense of pride here.
50. One must judge the various proposals on an equal basis.

Parts II–VII Omnibus Review: Sentence Errors and Weaknesses

- A. Each of the following sentences contains at least one error or weakness of a kind discussed in this book; many contain more than one. Practise your proofreading and revising. Label the sentences with the appropriate correction symbols.
1. The nature of his errors were not serious.
 2. There was a clear increase in strength of Protestant power, especially in England and Prussia who had benefitted from the treaty of Utrecht.
 3. In today's world it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find relatively inexpensive ways to use your leisure time.
 4. As far as league standings, this string of successive losses has put the team in an insurmountable hole.
 5. We at TSN want to feature a few more Canadian athletes at a young age.
 6. There were artists which continued to study and produce classical works and there were artists which developed new ideas in their fields.
 7. As for ancient man, being civilized was of no concern to one who was battling the many forces of nature such as hunting wild animals for food and shelter from the weather.
 8. Argentina, more than any country in Latin America, was a place of massive immigration over relatively few decades.
 9. The reason why their cars don't live as long is because most people have no idea of how to properly look after their cars.
 10. There's no golfer who wouldn't give his life to don the coveted green jacket, symbolizing a Masters victory and an automatic lifelong membership into the Augusta National Golf Club.
 11. This book provides what I think is indisputedly the best account of those troubled years.
 12. Friends say the feisty newspaperwoman would have liked to have become an artist.
 13. He was charged of embezzling over ten thousand dollars.
 14. As a single parent with two high schoolers, it took two jobs to stay afloat.
 15. During that period of time we talked to him on a nightly basis.
 16. The poem's strange theme states that one is better off dying at a young age rather than growing old.

17. An old Victorian mansion has a mysterious basement room which, by entering allows members of the household to travel through time.
18. I had truly scarred her while she had only embarrassed me.
19. At that point the immigration department closed the door tightly.
20. There's no question it was a tragedy, and there's also no question that it may have been prevented.
21. A hobby such as playing music in a band gives more than just enjoyment, it gives relaxation, self satisfaction, it is educational, and it is competitive.
22. During the long drought, many water areas, such as lakes and reservoirs, were drying up.
23. This evening's show features a family of nine who is competing in the National Karate Championships.
24. I felt a sudden needle like pain.
25. Based on her findings, she concluded that comedy was more healthful than tragedy.
26. The Board of Directors of Design for Today wishes to express their appreciation for assistance from many local individuals and businesses.
27. There are many arguments with respect to the importance of a university education in today's society.
28. In this modern day and age it is not unusual to find people who are ignorantly unaware of the technology of how things in our society work.
29. She had so many assignments over the holiday that she felt bogged under.
30. The police act against violators of this minor law only on a complaint basis.
31. They substituted butter with margarine in the belief that it was healthier.
32. As a soccer fan, recent events have been depressing.
33. The silver mentioned in the beginning and the end of the story not only symbolize freedom but they foreshadow a better future.
34. My grandfather was a very introspective-type individual.
35. He is one of those people, (and there are many of them) who does not understand economics.

36. When there never seems to be enough hours in a day, it's time to get yourself a cellular phone.
 37. Tonight's specialty is a dish that is a feast not only for the eyes but a treat for the palate as well.
 38. Failure to produce efficiently together with failure to reduce imports have had serious economic consequences.
 39. The show employs flashbacks to fill in the protagonist's background as a former Vietnam veteran and ex-New Orleans cop.
 40. Our opponent merely sights her party's ideology and says things are all right—but ask yourself, can you afford anymore?
 41. The government permits the sale of surplus material abroad on an intermittent basis.
 42. I hope you will forgive me pointing out certain weaknesses in your argument.
 43. The young woman had become addicted to the pain killing drug she was taking.
 44. The laws were made by the parliament and enforced by a police force, which is a similar system to the present.
 45. The room was furnished with the new chrome and plastic furniture but it wasn't very attractive.
 46. We shouldn't act in terms of a knee-jerk reaction to the present situation.
 47. She concluded from her investigation that under the new policy women employees may in fact receive a smaller increase than they may have otherwise received.
 48. The English aristocracy, which was mainly comprised of wealthy landowners, did not however, in spite of their comfortable lifestyle, know the manners and etiquette that seemed to elevate the French aristocracy.
 49. He promised he would take me to the movies, in spite of how much work that he hasn't finished yet, but has to do.
 50. As a valued Acme Bank customer we are pleased to extend to you the opportunity to apply for a personal loan at exceptional fixed interest rates.
- B.** Here are ten more sentences, most slightly longer or more complicated than the others, that invite more drastic or thoroughgoing revision.
1. The fact that there are many people who I can relate to, adds to a sense of security for me because I feel that I am liked and I have a position with them in society, which enhances my

self-identity.

2. Further implications for disaster in postponing the driving experience to an older age could be encountered in those people wishing to use the car as their primary means of transportation to work or a post-secondary institution.
3. The poem mentions statues, pictures, and stairways, all of these seem to enable the reader to picture Prufrock better and the people he associates with.
4. An older person has already made a lot of mistakes in their life and sharing their mistakes with new generations will keep from every generation having to start from a beginning.
5. I am still not sure whether or not I did the right thing about coming here but everyone thought it was, so here I am.
6. Some people may view Hamlet as a feeble, gutless young man who can't make up his mind about anything and this is what I believed at first. But by reading the play carefully and by observing Hamlet's actions this can't be true.
7. A hobby is often a nice way to relax or to just sit down and read a favourite novel or listen to some music, anything, just as long as it is relaxing.
8. I'm lucky to live in a great country, have a family who I love and am loved in return, have caring relations acquaintances, and the opportunity to meet strangers who may someday be friends.
9. With no increase in salaries, increased teaching loads, and cutbacks in research facilities, faculty is starting to slip away that university has already lost at least seven faculty members since January, and there are strong indications of many more to come.
10. By portraying the Queen as being blind to the situation of hate between Hamlet and the King, and the fact that she does not seem to even consider the fact that the King killed her previous husband, the audience's attitude toward the King is made even stronger.