Self-Edit Checklist:
Vague, Weak and Unnecessary Phrases

Eliminating useless words will make your story tighter and your writing stronger. Be specific and concise.

Vague

About	*Instead of:* About 15 people attended. *Try:* Ten to fifteen people attended.
Almost	*Instead of:* It was almost time for class. *Try:* Class started in two minutes.
Frequently	*Instead of:* He frequently washes his truck. *Try:* He washes his truck every day.
Thing	*Instead of:* I wanted to try one of those things. *Try:* I wanted to try one of those phones.
Type of	*Instead of:* It had a type of lip on it. *Try:* It had a lip on it.
Wonder, think, understand, realize	*Instead of:* I wondered whether Angel was the murderer. *Try:* Was Angel the murderer?

Weak

Adverbs (ending with -ly)	*Instead of:* She laughed loudly. *Try:* Her loud laugh rang through the party like a dinner bell.
Big	*Instead of:* He was a big man. *Try:* He was six feet tall and 270 pounds.
Finally	*Instead of:* Finally, he got the job. *Try:* After three interviews, he got the job.
Maybe, perhaps, simply	*Instead of:* She simply didn't know what to do. *Try:* She didn't know what to do.
Really	*Instead of:* Avoiding this word is a really good idea. *Try:* Avoiding this word is an excellent idea.
Short	*Instead of:* Mike was a short man. *Try:* Mike was four feet tall.
Small	*Instead of:* My desk is small. *Try:* My desk is three feet wide.
Sort of, kind of	*Instead of:* Using these words is sort of annoying to the reader. *Try:* Writing this way annoys the reader.
Start, begin, began, begun	*Instead of:* It had begun to rain. *Try:* It was raining.
Tall	*Instead of:* The building is tall. *Try:* The building is six hundred feet.
There are/there were/there will be	*Instead of:* There will be some people who fail the class. *Try:* Some people will fail the class.
There's/There is	*Instead of:* There's time to change your mind. *Try:* You still have time to change your mind.
Very	*Instead of:* He was very tired. *Try:* He was exhausted.

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Unnecessary

All of	*Instead of:* All of the guests loved the party. *Try:* All the guests loved the party.
Definitely, certainly, probably, actually, basically, virtually	*Instead of:* It was definitely time for the actual play to begin. *Try:* It was time for the play to begin.
Due to	*Instead of:* He got wet due to the rain. *Try:* The rain got him wet.
Has/have to be	*Instead of:* This has to be the right place. *Try:* This must be the right place.
Just	*Instead of:* That's just the way they write. *Try:* That's the way they write.
One of	*Instead of:* This is one of the best. *Try:* This is the best.
Over and over	*Instead of:* It went around the pole over and over. *Try:* It went around the pole repeatedly.
Rather, quite	*Instead of:* That movie was rather dull. *Try:* That movie was dull.
So	*Instead of:* It was so cold outside. *Try:* It was below zero outside.
That	*Instead of:* It means that it's good. *Try:* It means it's good.
The reason	*Instead of:* The reason you hate me is because I'm beautiful. *Try:* You hate me because I'm beautiful.
Totally, completely, absolutely, literally	*Instead of:* The box was completely full of clothes. *Try:* The box was stuffed with clothes.
Which is/who is	*Instead of:* Cherry, which is my favorite flavor, is also the name of my dog. *Try:* Cherry, my favorite flavor, is also the name of my dog.
You can/you're going to	*Instead of:* You can visit Oz by following the yellow brick road. *Try:* To visit Oz, follow the yellow brick road.

Also Check

A lot	Subjective and meaningless without context.
Some	Meaningless without context. *[Also sometimes, something, someone, somewhere, somewhat, somehow]*
Then	Use in a progression; otherwise use "and"
To be (am, are, is, was, were, being, been)	*Instead of:* Spot was running through the house. *Try:* Spot ran through the house.
Used to	Replace the past tense verb. *Instead of:* He used to write like that. *Try:* He wrote like that.

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