

Cut the Flab—what can I Cut, to better Say what I'm Trying to Say?

By Azalea Dabill

and

Help Stamp Out, Eliminate and Abolish Redundancy!

By unknown (Courtesy of Jeanne Leach)

Learning how to cut the flab is a matter of practice and preference. Any first draft piece usually benefits from cutting words. When we come upon a mind-picture of a scene, we often subconsciously test different ways of getting it across by repeating what we see on our page several times.

Following drafts give us a place and time to pick the best sensual experience, or to combine the facets of what make the gem. To add, mix, cut and paste. And don't rule out cutting a scene if it doesn't work.

All the mind-pictures that cross our mind do not fit our story. Some of them must go for the rest of our tale to fit together smoothly. Copy a bit of your writing, then whack away. (Save the original version in case you need to go back.) More often than not your piece will come out like a lamb: trim, white, and beautiful from shearing. If the shearing needed is denied, later you may find a lion tearing through the iron verbiage that barred it from freedom.

Read stories by writers you admire. The same goes for books on writing. See my website for my personal list of recommended books. Some encourage, and some instruct. Have fun practicing, and in your practice, enjoy writing. Enjoy the path, the aspiration, and the purpose of your writing and cutting. It is a good idea as you go along your writing journey to pin down as much as you can the reason *why*. Why do you want to write? Why do you write *what* you write?

Some authors and readers prefer poetic or literary writing while others like their stories less complex and more direct. There must be a balance of both bare-bones action and description in each type, of course. The proportion is the only thing that changes.

Plot driven books tend to be more bare-bones, and character driven books tend to show details of setting, the character's inner landscape, and action and reaction within and without.

Help Stamp Out, Eliminate and Abolish Redundancy!

By unknown

(Courtesy of Jeanne Leach)

My students are fond of writing, “I was thinking in my mind . . .” or “I was thinking in my head. . . .” This concerns me as I wonder in what other parts of their bodies thinking may (or may not) be happening.

These repeated or unnecessary words are sometimes difficult to weed out during editing. They remind me of all those tchotchkes littering my house - the clutter bunnies. You know, those dust collectors like the ceramic ducks from the oldest who’s now 40, the spoons from every vacation from sea to shining sea, the collection of broken shells from the bottom of every sea to shining sea.

Clutter bunnies invade our writing. They make it as weighty as coals in the Christmas stockings of a misbehaving child. Here’s the good news...the clutter in our writing doesn’t need to be dusted, just deleted.

Disclaimer: Depending on the circumstance, a repetition may be necessary to make a point or may be a stylistic device. I’m certainly not suggesting all repetition is B-A-D.

CHECK YOUR WRITING FOR THESE:

FAT VERSION

LEAN MACHINE VERSION

12midnight/12noon

midnight/noon

3 am in the morning

3 am

A total of 12 people

12 people

Added bonus

bonus

Baby calf

calf

Brief moment

moment

Burning hot

hot

Biography of her life

biography

Circle around

circle

Close proximity

close

Cooperate together

cooperate

Close scrutiny

scrutiny

Complete stop	stop
Consensus of opinion	consensus
Descend down	descend
Duplicate copy	duplicate OR copy
empty hole	hole
end result	result
exactly the same	same
false illusion	illusion
final farewell	farewell
first priority	priority
freezing cold/ice cold	cold
future plans	plans
free gift	gift
hanging down	hanging
honest truth/true fact	truth/fact
hot water heater	water heater
income coming in	income
in the event that	if
in spite of the fact that	although
it's raining outside	it's raining
merge/join together	merge/join
money-saving coupon	coupon
little baby	baby
knowledgeable experts	experts
pair of twins	twins
past tradition/experience	tradition/experience
previous history	history

null and void

null OR void

revert back/refer back/return back

revert/refer/return

safe sanctuary/safe haven

sanctuary/haven

sink down

sink

small speck/tiny bit

speck/bit

surrounded on all sides

surrounded

unique individual

individual

young child

child

P.S. One of my students asked if “redundancy” meant to dundancy again... Oh, my.

Jeanne Marie Leach

Author * Speaker * Freelance Fiction Editor * Writing Coach