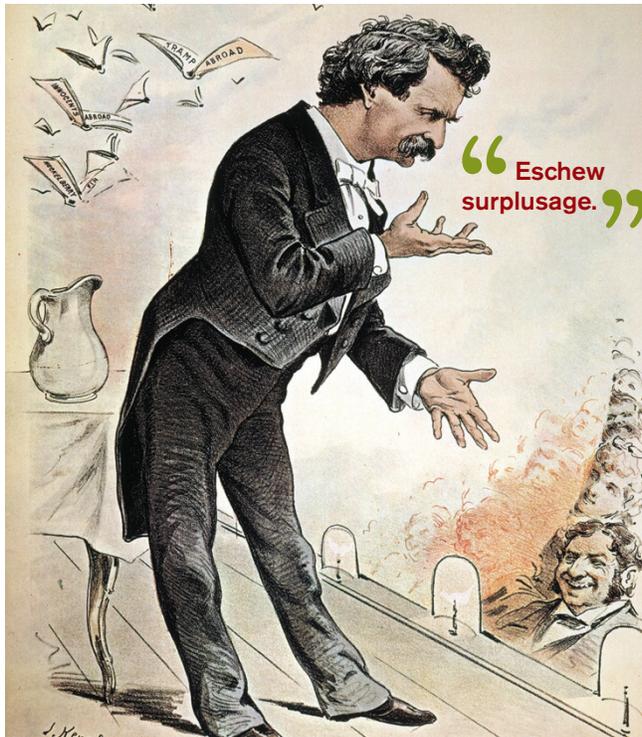


# Simplify, Simplify

~~It is highly recommended that you omit and refrain from using an abundance of extraneous, nonessential, and needless words in your writing.~~

William Strunk Jr. said it perfectly almost a century ago in his classic handbook on writing, *The Elements of Style*: “Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.”



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## Power Words

Words have power. Necessary words power your sentences. Unnecessary words dilute the power of your sentences. In his essay “Rules of Literary Art,” Mark Twain said, “Eschew surplusage.” Follow his advice.

## Kick Out the Freeloaders!

Words that sap the power of a sentence are like guests at a potluck who bring nothing to the party. They eat, but they don’t contribute. In writing, typical freeloaders are **obvious adjectives, redundancies, and empty phrases.**

### Obvious Adjectives

She cried ~~warm, salty~~ tears.

- > Tears are always warm and salty.
- > Crying implies tears.

Mark passed the ~~warm, fluffy, white~~ mashed potatoes to Ally.

- > Mashed potatoes are usually warm, fluffy, and white.

Unless the mashed potatoes are the focus of the story or scene, don’t state the obvious.

### Redundant Redundancies

- > Say it once.

On that ~~freezing cold and~~ bone-chilling morning, the bus broke down, and I had to walk to school ~~in the below-zero~~ weather.

- > It was cold. We get it.

Her eyes were large ~~in size~~ and brown ~~in color~~.

- > The “in” phrases add nothing.

### Empty Phrases

The fact is ...

The fact that ...

It is true that ...

### Examples

~~because~~

I got wet ~~due to the fact that~~ it was raining.

### Fix-Its

- > Delete or use a more direct word.

What I want to say is ...

I just wanted to say ...

~~I just wanted to say~~ I love you.

- > Just say it.

Who is ...

Which was ...

~~The man who is~~ my father is very tall.

- > Delete.

Is the one who ...

He is ~~the one who~~ is going to light the torch.

- > Delete.

**make every word count. make sure every word brings something to the party.**