

Word Editing

The first step to successfully editing your own documents is to start at the basic level, the word. In fact, most errors occur at this level. So, in order to correct those word problems, systematically edit the word first.

Four Basic Steps for Word Editing:

- 1. Locate Homonyms.** Remember, homonyms are words that sound the same but are spelled differently and do not share the same meaning. Incorrect homonym usage is one of the largest writing errors that we see in written communication. And, most of the errors are the simple homonyms: too, to, two; there, their, they're; it's, its; for, four, fore; principle, principal; wear, ware.
 - **Search** the Internet for a list of common and often the most misused homonyms and keep it near your writing space.
 - **Underline** the homonyms in your document.
 - **Identify** the misused homonyms.
 - **Change** your incorrect homonym for the correct word.
- 2. Identify any slang or colloquial words** that you have written in your text. Slang and colloquial words are words that should never be used in a business document. Slang words are those words that are used in a more metaphoric way like saying hot for good and bad for good. Colloquial words are those words and phrases that are commonly used by groups of people and are usually regional.
 - **Locate** the slang or colloquial and replace with a more professional word or phrase.
 - **Change** the slang or colloquial words, phrases, or clauses to more formal language.
 - If you are not sure about a word or phrase, look it up.
- 3. Identify clichés** that you may have used and remove them from your writing. A cliché is a word or phrase that has been used so much that it becomes common. An example would be to rob Peter to pay Paul or better late than never.
 - Locate the clichés.
 - **Remove** all clichés from your writing.
- 4. Identify pretentious language.** Pretentious language is the use of long or complicated words. Examples are using ascertain in place of find out or optimal for best or utilize for use.
 - **Locate** any pretentious language and decide if this word is correctly used and is it necessary—it is always best to use language that reflects sincerity as opposed to pretentious language that often alienates your readers.

Note: Remember, business writing must be world ready: people from all over the country and the world should be able to read your document and understand what you are writing. Also, if your document must be translated into another language, you must do all that you can to make sure that you have written without symbolic meanings. Many times, the translators do not understand



the connotative meaning and will translate a word or phrase literally, which will seem out of context to the point you are trying to make.