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| -Reader Mileage Philosophy Readers have a limit they'll read That limit is getting smaller Do not waste reader's time | -Writer Philosophy Write to communicate ideas Character, mood, setting, plot Identify idea Cut the filler Do more than one |
| -Filler Philosophy Reader already knows Been told already Reader should know Is ordinary or expected Often increase Narrative Distance  Also just distracting | -Infinitive: a verb form normally identical with the first person singular that performs some functions of a noun and displays some characteristics of a verb and that is used with *to,* except with auxiliary and various other verbs.-Article: any of a small set of words or affixes (such as a, an, the) used with nouns to limit or give definiteness to the application. |
| -To Be or Not To Be The most used, blandest verb Be, Been, Being Am, is, are Was, were Replace/eliminate where easy | I was sitting in an interrogation room. The walls were smooth and gray. There was a package of Oreos on the metal table taunting me. *I sat alone in an interrogation room. Smooth gray walls boxed me in. A package of Oreos taunted me on the cold metal table.* |
| -Smothered Verb Verb that becomes a noun Add unnecessary words to create Turn it back into the actual verb "made a decision (decided)" | I came to the conclusion many hours ago that the cookies were a trap. I have a tendency to pick up a pack on my way home. They made the decision to use that against me.*I concluded many hours ago that the cookies were a trap. I tend to pick up a pack on my way home. They decided to use that against me.*  |
| -Redundant Body Parts Pointing out obvious body parts Not possible motions Unintentionally comical Reader can assume mechanics Delete the offending part or rewrite | And yet, I reached my hand for them. I looked over every detail with my eyes. My tongue licked chapped and trembling lips.*And yet I reached for them. I looked over every detail. I licked chapped and trembling lips.*  |
| -Filtering Highlighting observation of an object Forceful highlight of flashbacking Just describe the thing | I noticed that the seal was broken ever so slightly. I smelled the powdered sugar and corn syrup scents filling the room. *The seal was broken ever so slightly. Powdered sugar and corn syrup scents filled the room.* |
| -Chronology Words  Before and After Distracting, patronizing, removes suspense Write in order | The door burst open before a man walked in. A woman followed after him. I looked first at the pair, then at the crème-filled sandwiches. *The door burst open, and a man walked in. A woman followed. I looked between the pair and the crème-filled sandwiches.*  |
| -Excessive Explanation  A destination  Why something is done How something is done Objects in space | The man moved from the door to the table so that he could take a seat. He pulled one of the two chairs on the left side of the table out from under the table with his hand, about a foot or two to accommodate is bulk.*The man sat in one of the two unoccupied chairs.*  |
| -Intention to Act  Character does X to achieve Y  Infinitive tells why, verb shows how Highlights the wrong thing Skip it. Just act.  Replace with a conjunction, tweak conjugation | He reached forward to pull the blue package towards himself. He pinched the loose flap to open the top and reached in to take one of the cookies. *He pulled the blue package towards himself, tugging the loose flap open. He held up one of the cookies.*  |
| -Ly adverbs Telling reader the already know Normally with dialogue, speech tag, verb Delete and read without the adverb Bulk up offending weak point | It looked tantalizingly delicious. Sweat rolled slowly down my face. “Sorry, did you want one?” he asked seductively, neatly offering the treat. *It looked delicious. Sweat snaked down my cheek.* *“Sorry, did you want one?” he asked, offering the treat.* |
| -Suddenly! Slowing down the thing happening Cut to make the writing feel fast Verb that indicates speed and surprise Try for an emotional journey | Suddenly, the cookie had completely evaporated. Crushed. Sharp, red-pointed nails suddenly glint on the table. *The cookie evaporated. Crushed. Sharp, red-polished nails glinted in the crumbs.*  |
| -Tentative Language Uncertainty drags down prose  Delete or bulk up verb Describe why character thinks | She seemed very angry. Anywhere between three and five fingers tapped the table. *A scowl painted her red lips, and anger furrowed her brow. Three fingers tapped the table.*  |
| -Ten Point Vocab Words Use sparingly in whole manuscript Distracting, even if not close | My brain sent alarum through my adrenal glands. Inquietude filled my jittering restless lower extremity. *Adrenaline flooded my system, and I couldn’t stop my restless leg.*  |
| -Unintentional Repetition Words (even for different meanings) Effect (not stronger) Dialogue tags expressing emotion Too many brand names Hot Tip! Interior monologue | She swept the Oreo crumbs to the Linoleum ground. “I’ll mince you like ground beef,” she hissed, forcing menace into each word. That Dior polish shined as she raised her hand. ‘This woman is terrifying. She crushed that Oreo brand sandwich cookie like it was nothing. I’m going to die,’ I thought. *She swept the crumbs away. “I’ll mince you like beef,” she hissed. I thought, ‘I’m going to die’* |
| -Large Scale Same characters, same place, same thing One-time events or mundane happenings Stereotyped characters | The door crashed open, and a woman strode in, her back straight, bun tight, nails green, and eyes hard. She locked eyes with me, pulling out another of the precious cookies and obliterating it in her fist. *(Delete entirely. There’s no saving this one. What have I created)* |
| How Punny Unintentional Puns Cliched language Ridiculous images | She sucked in a deep breath, her nostrils flaring out like elephant ears. “Sorry. I didn’t mean to come on you so fast. I know I can be really hot. With great power comes great responsibility.”*She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “Sorry. That was unprofessional of me. I let my temper get the better of me.”*  |
| Personal Filler Words Favorite Words Pet phrases Word Clouds  Make a list | Words that are not Filler Words Articles Pronouns Conjunctions Said, shouted, asked Character names |
| When to Use the Words Filler word is the main idea Ease up the tension Introduce a different mood To make it make sense Deepen character voice, 1st person | Why Do We Filler Bad reading habits Lack of confidence Trust. Your. Reader. Trust. Your. Self. |