

Part VII: Diction – Solutions

Exercise 59: Slang (see section #63a)

List as many slang terms as you can think of for each of the following. Which are current in your vocabulary? Which, if any, would you consider using in an academic essay? In a letter to a friend? In a letter to a parent, uncle, or aunt?

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. criminal (n.) | con, thug, crook |
| 2. intoxicated | plastered |
| 3. cheat (v.) | swindle, rip off |
| 4. court (v.) | woo |
| 5. very good | cool, sweet |
| 6. talk (v.) | gab, natter |
| 7. sweetheart | honey, darling |
| 8. man | guy, dude |
| 9. police officer | cop |
| 10. beautiful | gorgeous |
| 11. food | grub, chow |
| 12. inspiring | mind-blowing |

Exercise 60: Informal, Colloquial (see section #63b)

Provide formal substitutes for each of the slang or informal terms below. Use your dictionary or thesaurus as necessary. Then compose sentences for at least ten of the listed terms, using them in ways that you think would be acceptable in relatively formal writing.

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. bawl out | scold, berate, chastise |
| 2. bellyache (vb.) | complain |
| bellyache (n.) | stomach ache, abdominal pain |
| 3. cheapskate | miser |
| 4. chintzy | cheap |
| 5. chump | dupe |
| 6. con (vb.) | cheat |
| 7. conniption | rage, tantrum, fit |
| 8. cook up | concoct |
| 9. crackdown | enforcement |
| 10. crummy | miserable |
| 11. jock | athlete |
| 12. cute | precocious |
| 13. ditch | abandon |
| 14. down the tube | gone |
| 15. face the music | confront |
| 16. fall guy | scapegoat |
| 17. high and mighty | haughty |
| 18. hoot | a joke, a laugh |
| 19. hunch | premonition |

20. miss out	forego, lose an opportunity
21. monkey business	mischief
22. on the spot	implicated
23. scrounge	scavenge
24. slapdash	hasty
25. southpaw	lefthander
26. egghead	intellectual
27. shocker	surprise
28. up the creek	in trouble

Exercise 61: “Fine Writing” (see section #63c)

For each of the following words, provide one or more equivalents that are less formal and more natural. Use your dictionary or thesaurus as necessary. Which of these words do you recognize but not use yourself? Which do you consider to be in your working vocabulary? Mark any that you think should not necessarily be avoided as pretentious or overly formal in a non-academic context.

[overly pretentious words are marked with an asterisk]

1. ablutions*	ritual washing
2. assiduity*	perseverance
3. bellicose	warlike
4. cachinnation*	laughter
5. circumambient*	surrounding
6. collation	arrangement
7. colloquy	conversation
8. comminatory*	threatening
9. comotation*	drinking party
10. concatenation*	linkage
11. confabulate	meet
12. conflagration	fire
13. contumelious*	insulting
14. crepuscular*	dimly lit
15. defenestration*	the act of throwing someone out a window
16. divagation*	digression
17. doff	take off or tip one’s hat
18. egress	exit
19. eleemosynary*	charitable
20. equitation	horsemanship
21. erstwhile	former, previous
22. frangible	fragile, breakable
23. gustatory	taste
24. habiliments*	clothes
25. hebdomadal*	weekly
26. impudicity*	immodesty, shamelessness
27. ineluctable	irresistible
28. jejune	dull

29. lubricity*	slipperiness
30. lucubrations*	pedantic writings
31. matutinal	early in the morning
32. mentation*	mental activity
33. objurgation*	a rebuke
34. obloquy*	abusive language, incoherence
35. oppugning*	opposing
36. orthography	spelling
37. otiose*	functionless
38. pellucid	clear
39. penurious	poor
40. peregrinations*	travels
41. propinquity	nearness
42. raison d'être	purpose, reason for being
43. rebarbative*	irritating, unattractive
44. repast	meal
45. rubicund	red-faced
46. salubrious	healthful
47. sartorial	related to clothing
48. serendipitous	fortunate
49. sesquipedalian*	overly long, words of many syllables
50. superincumbent	lying on top of
51. tenebrous*	dark, gloomy
52. transpontine*	across a bridge; also, highly melodramatic plays
53. vilipend*	to disparage, criticize
54. visage	face
55. veridical	truthful, realistic
56. Weltanschauung	world view

Exercise 62 (1): Concrete and Abstract Diction (see section #65a) / Weak Generalizations (see section #65b)

For each of the following words, supply several increasingly specific terms; take at least a few all the way to a single specific item.

1. car – hybrid model – Prius
2. art – painting – modern painting – Picasso's *Guernica*
3. answered – responded – refuted
4. said – observed – criticized
5. food – green vegetable – broccoli
6. drink (vb.) – imbibe – sip
7. drink (n.) – hot beverage – specialty coffee – mocha latte
8. people – young people – child soldiers – child soldiers of Sierra Leone
9. mythical thing – god – Zeus
10. entertainment – movie – classic comedy – *Night at the Opera*
11. creature – pet – exotic pet – Capuchin monkey
12. structure – building – house – bungalow

13. see – inspect – scrutinize
14. moved – walked – strolled
15. concept – idea – philosophy - existentialism
16. freedom – liberty – right – habeas corpus
17. music – contemporary music – jazz

Exercise 62 (2): Concrete and Abstract Diction / Weak Generalizations

Rewrite the following vague and abstract paragraph from a letter of application for an entry-level research position at a community newspaper. The ad for the position called for details of the applicant's educational and employment experience, so in your revision, try to make the paragraph sharp and vivid by supplying concrete and specific details wherever suitable.

My recently completed Bachelor of Science in Ecology from the University of Alberta and my two years of Co-Op experience as a junior researcher at the Canadian Centres for Disease Control combine to make me well-suited, I believe, to meet the needs of your organization. At university, I studied courses in both the arts (Scientific Writing, Research Methods) and sciences (including senior seminars in Scientific Method and Laboratory Practices); I also presented a paper on Alberta's endangered bird species at an undergraduate research conference and have had my paper accepted for publication in *Habitat Studies*. I have worked for the past six years as a volunteer for the Canadian Wildlife Federation and the David Suzuki Foundation, and my pre-Co-Op summer employment at Environment Canada, the Workers Compensation Board of BC, and the Bank of Montreal have given me varied experience working in busy office settings.

Exercise 63: Connotation and Denotation (see section #66)

Label each of the following words as having an unfavourable (u), neutral (n), or favourable (f) connotation; it might help if you place the words in each group on a scale running from *u* to *f*. Explain cases where you think some could be labelled more than one way, depending on context. Use your dictionary if necessary.

1. artless (u), crass (u), dense (u), foolish (u), green (u), ignorant (u), inept (u), ingenuous (u), naïve (u), obtuse (u), shallow (u), unsophisticated (u), unthinking (u)
2. bony (u), gaunt (u), lanky (n), lean (n), rawboned (u), scrawny (u), skinny (u), slender (f), slight (n), slim (f), spare (n), spindly (u), svelte (f), thin (u), trim (f), twiggy (u), underweight (u)
3. artful (f), clever (n), crafty (u), cunning (u), devious (u), diplomatic (f), foxy (u), greasy (u), guileful (u), insinuating (u), oily (u), scheming (u), slimy (u), slippery (u), sly (u), smooth (u), suave (n), tricky (u), unctuous (u), wily (u)
4. arrogance (u), assurance (f), audacity (n), boldness (f), brass (u), brazenness (u), cheek (u), chutzpah (f), effrontery (u), gall (u), highhandedness (u), impertinence (u), impudence (u), insolence (u), nerve (u), pride (n), presumption (u), temerity (u)
5. bookworm (u), brain (n), brainworker (n), egghead (u), genius (f), highbrow (u), intellectual (f), mind (n), pedant (u), sage (f), savant (f), scholar (f), smarty (u), thinker (f)

Exercise 64: Euphemism (see section #67)

Supply more straightforward equivalents for the following terms.

1. job action, work stoppage: strike, lockout
2. revenue enhancement: tax increase
3. repeat offender: career criminal
4. correctional facility: prison
5. surveillance satellites: spy satellites
6. in custody: under arrest
7. memorial chapel: funeral home (mortuary); memorial park: cemetery
8. untruth: lie
9. friendly fire: in wartime, shot by one's fellow soldiers
10. indisposed: sick, ill
11. weather event: storm

Exercise 65: Wrong Word (see section #68)

Correct the wrong words in the following sentences.

1. The conference is intended to focus attention on the problems facing our affluent society.
2. The performance of our local orchestra was spirited and energetic.
3. The company's representative claimed to be authorities on the subject.
4. Politicians try to maintain an impressive image in the eyes of the public.
5. We tried to convince her that her fear was entirely imaginary.
6. Some shoppers stopped buying coffee because they found the price so exorbitant, if not astronomical.
7. The premier of Alberta led his party to the best of his abilities.
8. He was decidedly on the wrong track with that theory.
9. It was an incredible display of manual dexterity.
10. The cat was very heavy, weighing over twenty pounds.
11. It was obvious that good coaching was responsible for the team's success.
12. Having an ice cream cone for dessert was a special treat for the little boy.
13. Her acceptance of the job was made on the basis of her research and her feelings about the people she met at the interview.
14. The doctors were afraid that the accident victim's injuries would prove to be fatal.
15. The professor instructed the student in the use of the new software.

Exercise 66: Idiom (see section #69)

Correct the unidiomatic usages in the following sentences.

1. She has an unusual philosophy about modern technology.
2. He suggested that I use this new product. (OR, He suggested using this new product.)

3. Last summer, I was given a scrawny, mangy mutt.
4. Desdemona had unquestioning faith in Iago's character.
5. Tanya made us laugh with stories of her adventures in the Yukon.
6. The analysis is weak because it lacks specific details.
7. I am amazed by the report's suggestions.
8. Lovers and poets create dream worlds which only they can inhabit.
9. Ironically, although Huck fails, Tom succeeds in freeing Jim.
10. The generation gap between them is evident in their uneasiness over each other's boredom.
11. We discussed climate change.
12. The class emphasized mathematics skills.
13. They are excited about introducing the new product to their customers.
They are excited to introduce the new product to their customers.
14. He was proud of being given the opportunity to welcome the CEO to the branch office.

Exercise 67 (1): Wordiness (see section #70a) / Repetition (see section #70b) / Redundancy (see section #70c)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate wordiness.

1. Nature is a powerful image in this poem.
2. Today's courses require more research and thought than the age-old memory work typical of education in the past.
3. He was puzzled.
4. Advances in information technology make possible greater computerization of machinery.
5. Since he is human, Othello has many faults.
6. Her self-confidence made her strong.
7. The president and the prime minister agree about the future.
8. The playwright also used repetition.
9. Two hundred people pressed against the ropes outside the auditorium.
10. In the past sixth months, I have had to move twice.
11. The farmer worried because he saw only a few bees pollinating his crops.
12. We need to make a decision about the project now in order to meet the deadline.
13. Recently, I've noticed that some employees are working through lunch.

Exercise 67 (2): Wordiness / Repetition / Redundancy

Often one can save many words by combining two or more drafted sentences. Try doing this with each of the following excerpts, from students' drafts; cut all the wordiness you can while you're at it.

1. Parents who wish to see a game live and without their children must leave them at home with a babysitter; they end up paying for the sitter as well as the game.
2. At soccer practice, our coach would single out players who performed poorly in passing drills, requiring them to run laps after the practice was over.
3. A surprising number of lawyers and stockbrokers play the game; they thrive on the strategic planning the game requires.

Exercise 68: Redundancy (see section #70c)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate redundancy.

1. If enough food cannot be supplied for all the people in the world, humankind will have to deal with widespread famine.
2. He is adventurous, but not reckless.
3. Looking ahead, the economist sees slow growth in the Canadian economy.
4. She approached the door with feelings of dread.
5. Golding's *Lord of the Flies* concerns a group of young boys who revert to savagery.
6. If one doesn't examine the subject thoroughly, one might miss something important.
7. Most people would rather flee danger than face it.
8. Carol realized that she first had to make a careful outline to produce a well-organized essay.
9. She told him exactly what she thought of him.
10. The singer in the film does not fit the musician stereotype.
11. The children were delighted by storyteller's visit to their pre-school.
12. The store had a vast selection of items for all its customers.
13. Much research was required to complete the proposal before its due date.
14. After reading the novel, she thought about how the author's theme related to her own life.
15. Traveling to other countries can be a life-changing experience.

Part VII Review: Diction

Revise the following sentences to strengthen the diction and normalize the usage; correct any other errors you find, as well.

1. They discussed the psychiatrist's role in motivating athletes.
2. The team is a close-knit unit.
3. Our strategy is to position union members advantageously.
4. Because this word is repeated throughout the play, it is important.
5. In the winter tourists spend less.
6. Her perfectionism is evident in her business.
7. We hope that this weekend's events will be successful.
8. He did not know how to use the tools properly.

9. One error usually leads to another.
10. This passage is essential in the novel.
11. His metaphors evoke a sinister feeling in the reader.
12. Eliot sees his poems as part of a tradition of knowledge and poetry.
13. She has him at her beck and call.
14. He found himself powerless.
15. I resolved to do my best to make friends and work hard.
16. The hulls of many tankers were ripped open, dumping countless barrels of oil into the sea.
17. Hamlet spends the whole play looking for an opportunity to avenge his father's death.
18. This poem suggests that one should seize the day.
19. He is only in town occasionally.
20. The prime minister is waiting for the premiers to present their demands.
21. Because she gave me so much money, I thanked her profusely.
22. The deal might not have gone ahead if Anderson hadn't been so persistent.
23. In watching these shows or movies, viewers may develop a love of violence.
24. This man thought it was his duty to exact revenge.
25. In Olympic sports, nationalism is becoming increasingly important.
26. She saw that this was the remnant of an important species.
27. For more than a million Canadians, back pain is incapacitating: it slows ordinary movements and turns routine events into torture.
28. We are all intensely involved in profiting from the expenses of others.
29. The opposition capitalized on the coalition's contribution to the passage of the legislation.
30. He is as comfortable mixing with celebrities as he is relaxing at home.
31. These instructions are contingent upon your acceptance.
32. The prime minister's reply, he complained, was 'warm and gracious but not very specific.'
33. Iago is regarded by all as an honest man.
34. The character Nicholas is recognizable to readers who are realists.
35. Thanks to your financial commitment, an alternative to on-air fundraising is possible.
36. This book about a politician will negatively affect his opponents' interests.
37. The premier has tried to pressure the legislature to go along with her proposals.
38. After going only a hundred miles, the ship was forced to return to its point of origin.
39. You'll be amazed, too, at our low prices on basic apparel.
40. The new program will cost in the region of five million dollars.
41. You can expect similar amounts of precipitation over the long weekend.
42. The minister said that she had no comment.
43. There was a consensus in the neighbourhood that ambulance service was slow.
44. Today, environmentalists are trying to replace the word "buy" with the word "recycle."
45. We have to reconsider the legal elements of the proposal.
46. I was playing my typical game.
47. It seems as if he is angry with her for trying to deceive him.
48. Frodo continually fretted about the Ring.
49. I detect a sense of pride here.
50. One must judge the proposals equally.

Parts II–VII Omnibus Review: Sentence Errors and Weaknesses

A. Each of the following sentences contains at least one error or weakness of a kind discussed in this book; many contain more than one. Practise your proofreading and revising. Label the sentences with the appropriate correction symbols.

1. The nature of his errors ~~were~~ **was** not serious.
2. There was a clear increase in strength of Protestant power, especially in England and Prussia, ~~who~~ **which** had benefitted from the Treaty of Utrecht.
3. In today's world, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find relatively inexpensive ways to use ~~your~~ **one's** leisure time.
4. As far as league standings **go**, this string of ~~successive~~ losses has put the team in an insurmountable hole.
5. We at TSN want to feature a few more Canadian athletes **that are** at a young age.
6. There were artists ~~which~~ **that** continued to study and produce classical works, and ~~there were artists which~~ **others that** developed new ideas in their fields.
7. As for ancient man, being civilized was of no concern to one who was battling the many forces of nature, such as hunting wild animals for food and **finding** shelter from the weather.
8. Argentina, more than any country in Latin America, was a place of massive immigration ~~over~~ **for** relatively few decades.
9. The reason ~~why~~ their cars don't **live last** as long is ~~because~~ **that** most people have no idea of how to properly look after ~~their cars~~ **them**.
10. There's no golfer who wouldn't give his life to don the coveted green jacket, **which** symbolizes ~~ing~~ a ~~M~~ **member's** victory and **grants** an automatic lifelong membership ~~in~~ the Augusta National Golf Club.
11. This book provides what I think is ~~indisputedly~~ **indisputably** the best account of those troubled years.
12. Friends say the feisty newspaperwoman would have liked to ~~have~~ become an artist.
13. He was charged ~~of~~ **with**-embezzling over ten thousand dollars.
14. As a single parent with two high schoolers, it took **her** two jobs to stay afloat.
15. During that period of time, we talked to him on a nightly basis.
16. The poem's strange theme states that "one is better off dying at a young age rather than growing old."
17. ~~An~~ **The** old Victorian mansion has a mysterious basement room, which, by entering, allows members of the household to travel through time.
18. I had truly ~~scarred~~ **scared** her, while she had only embarrassed me.
19. At that point, the immigration department closed the door tightly.
20. There's no question it was a tragedy; and ~~there's also no question~~ that it ~~may~~ **could** have been prevented.
21. A hobby such as playing music in a band gives more than just enjoyment; it gives relaxation; and self-satisfaction, ~~it~~ **and** is educational; and ~~it is~~ competitive.
22. During the long drought, many water areas, such as lakes and reservoirs; ~~were drying~~ **dried** up.
23. This evening's show features a family of nine ~~who~~ **that** is competing in the National Karate Championships.
24. I felt a sudden needlelike pain.
25. Based on her findings, she concluded that comedy was ~~more healthful~~ **healthier** than tragedy.

26. The ~~B~~board of ~~D~~irectors of Design for Today wishes to express their appreciation for the assistance ~~they received~~ from many local individuals and businesses.
27. There are many arguments ~~with respect to~~ ~~about~~ the importance of a university education in today's society.
28. In this modern day and age, it is not unusual to find people ~~who that~~ are ~~ignorantly unaware~~ ignorant of the ~~about~~ technology of how things in our society work.
29. She had so many assignments over the holiday that she felt bogged ~~under~~ down.
30. The police act against violators of this minor law ~~only~~ on a complaint basis ~~only~~.
31. They substituted butter with margarine ~~in the belief~~ believing that it was healthier.
32. As a soccer fan, ~~she found~~ recent events ~~have been~~ depressing.
33. The silver mentioned ~~in~~ at the beginning and the end of the story not only symbolizes freedom but ~~they~~ also foreshadows a better future.
34. My grandfather was a very introspective-~~type~~ individual.
35. He is one of those people, (and there are many of them) who does not understand economics.
36. When there never seems to be enough hours in a day, it's time ~~for you~~ to get yourself a cellular phone.
37. Tonight's specialty is a dish that is ~~not only~~ a feast ~~not only~~ for the eyes but ~~also~~ a treat for the palate ~~as well~~.
38. Failure to produce efficiently, together with failure to reduce imports, ~~have~~ ~~has~~ had serious economic consequences.
39. The show employs flashbacks to fill in the protagonist's background as a former Vietnam veteran and ex-~~New Orleans~~ cop.
40. Our opponent merely ~~sights~~ ~~cites~~ her party's ideology and says things are all right; but ask yourself, can ~~you~~ ~~I~~ afford anymore?
41. The government permits the sale of surplus material abroad, on an intermittent basis.
42. I hope you will forgive me ~~for~~ pointing out certain weaknesses in your argument.
43. The young woman had become addicted to the pain-killing drug she was taking.
44. The laws were made by ~~the~~ ~~p~~Parliament and enforced by ~~a~~ ~~the~~ police force, which is ~~a~~ similar ~~system~~ to the present ~~system~~.
45. The room was furnished with ~~the~~ new chrome-and-plastic furniture, but it wasn't very attractive.
46. We shouldn't ~~act in terms of~~ ~~respond to the present situation with~~ a knee-jerk reaction ~~to the present situation~~.
47. She concluded from her investigation that under the new policy, women employees may in fact receive an ~~smaller~~ increase ~~smaller~~ than ~~what they may might~~ have ~~otherwise~~ received ~~otherwise~~.
48. The English aristocracy, which was mainly ~~comprised~~ ~~composed~~ of wealthy landowners, did not ~~know~~ ~~however~~, ~~in spite of~~ ~~despite~~ their comfortable lifestyle, ~~know~~ the manners and etiquette that seemed to elevate the French aristocracy.
49. He promised he would take me to the movies, ~~in spite of~~ ~~despite~~ how much work ~~that~~ he ~~hasn't~~ ~~hadn't~~ finished ~~and had~~ yet, ~~but has~~ to do.
50. As a valued Acme Bank customer, we are pleased to ~~extend to~~ ~~offer~~ you the opportunity ~~to~~ ~~of applying~~ for a personal loan at exceptional fixed interest rates.

B. Here are ten more sentences, most slightly longer or more complicated than the others, that invite more drastic or thoroughgoing revision.

1. The fact that there are many people whom I can relate to, adds to ~~a~~ **my** sense of security **and enhances my self-esteem** ~~for me~~ because I feel that I am liked and I have a position ~~with~~ them in society, ~~which enhances my self-identity.~~
2. Further implications for disaster in ~~p~~ **P**ostponing the driving experience to an older age could be **disastrous for** ~~encountered in~~ those people wishing to use the car as their primary means of transportation to work or a post-secondary institution ~~could encounter.~~
3. The poem mentions statues, pictures, and stairways; all of these **details** seem to enable the reader to **better** picture Prufrock ~~better~~ and the people he associates with.
4. An older person has already made a lot of mistakes in ~~their~~ **his or her** life; ~~and~~ sharing ~~their~~ **these** mistakes with new generations will keep **them** from ~~every generation~~ having to start from ~~a~~ **the** beginning.
5. I am still not sure whether ~~or not~~ I ~~did~~ **have done** the right thing ~~about~~ **in** coming here, but everyone ~~thought~~ **thinks** it ~~was~~ **is**, so here I am.
6. Some people may view Hamlet as a feeble, gutless young man who can't make up his mind about anything, and this is what I, **too**, believed at first. But by reading the play carefully and by observing Hamlet's actions, **I see that viewing him as such** ~~this~~ can't be ~~true~~ **right**.
7. A hobby is often a nice way to relax: ~~or to~~ just sit down and read a favourite novel or listen to some music—**do** anything, ~~just~~ as long as it is relaxing.
8. I'm lucky to live in a great country, **to** have a family whom I love and am loved **by** in return, **to** have caring relationships **and** acquaintances, and **to have** the opportunity to meet strangers who may someday **become my** friends.
9. With no increase in salaries, increased teaching loads, and cutbacks in research facilities, faculty ~~is~~ **are** starting to slip away: ~~that~~ **the** university has already lost at least seven faculty members since January, and there are strong indications of many more **losses** to come.
10. ~~By portraying the Queen as being blind to the situation of hate between Hamlet and the King, and the fact that she does not seem to even consider the fact that the King killed her previous husband, the audience's attitude toward the King is made even stronger.~~ **Shakespeare's portrayal of** the Queen as blind **not only to** the hate between Hamlet and the King, **but also to** the fact that the King killed her previous husband **reinforces** the audience's **feeling about** the King.