

Essay Writing: Dead Words

The following vague, confusing, or inappropriate words should be avoided in formal writing. *Never* use contractions, conversational words, slang words, or filler words except in quoted dialogue.

Vague words:

bad
good
in conclusion
in my opinion
kind of
sort of
there (esp. "there is" and "got there")
thing

Unclear verbs:

be (is, are, am, was, were)
do/did (She did a good job.)
get/got (He got sick.)
go/went (They went home.)
have/has/had (He had brown hair.)
I believe (avoid "I" statements
in formal writing)
I feel
I think

Exaggerating words:

a lot
absolutely
all/always
awesome
basically, pretty
clearly
completely
definitely
everything, anything, nothing, something
extremely
fine
great
gross
incredible(incredibly)
never/ever
obvious(ly)
perfect
really
super
totally
truly
very

Conversational words:

all *contractions* (I've, don't, wasn't)
anyway(s)
being that
boring
due to
fun
hopefully
just (as in "We just couldn't wait.")
like (as in "He's, like, so not fair.")
ok
all *slang* ("It was just, like, totally cool.")
so (as in "That's so not cool!")
stuff
till
well (as in "Well, I think...")