

The Secret to the Find and Refine Method™

(Updated report # 112 by Bobbie Christmas)

“Style often applies more to what you take out of your writing than what you put in.” –Bobbie Christmas

Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing by Bobbie Christmas explains dozens of words and phrases that point to “missed opportunities for improvement” in a manuscript. The Find and Refine Method™ that Bobbie created, as explained in her book, shows writers of fiction and nonfiction how to find their “missed opportunities for improvement” while using Microsoft Word, the standard among publishers.

Once writers find specific words and phrases, they have the option of leaving the writing as it is or refining their words to make their writing stronger, more powerful, and more stylish.

The Find and Refine Method™ takes advantage of the Find function. To find a word or phrase you want, type Ctrl+F for Find. Type in the word you want, and your computer will show you each instance. You can also use Ctrl+H if you’d like to match upper or lowercase letters, for example if you want to know if you started too many sentences with the word “And.” Ctrl+H gives you a dialogue box that allows you to click on More and then click on Match Case. You then type your word starting with the capital letter, and the computer will find only those words that match.

After you have found a missed opportunity for improvement, you have the chance to examine it and decide the following:

1. Have I used this word too often? If so, find another word to replace it in a few places.
2. Have I used this word correctly? If not, change it to the correct word choice.
3. Does this word or phrase represent a missed opportunity for improvement in any way? If so, follow the recommendations explained further in *Write In Style*.
4. Can I delete this word without harming the meaning of the sentence? If so, delete it.
5. Is this word or phrase a cliché? If so, rewrite or delete it.
6. Is this sentence in passive voice? If so, and if possible, rewrite it.
7. Is this attribution inverted? If so, rewrite it.
8. Have I used attributions too often? If so, replace some with sentences that depict action, body language, or another visual aspect.
9. Are the characters calling each other by name too often? If so, delete some instances.
10. Is this word redundant? If so, delete it.

Write In Style explains many words, letters, phrases, and other things you can Find and Refine in our own manuscripts. It also gives exercises that allow you to practice your newfound ability to find missed opportunities and be objective about what you edit.

For even more information, buy *Write In Style* at http://zebraeditor.com/book_write_in_style.shtml.

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