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Use this guide to aid in the writing process by avoiding confusing terminology and commonly misused words that will detract from your paper.

Avoid This Word/Phrase	Why	Use This Instead
Today, today's world, the world, society, nowadays, currently	Vague and unclear terms can confuse the reader. These terms are also too broad.	Twenty-first century society, contemporary society, Western society
Kind of, sort of	Too informal	Slightly, somewhat, merely, simply
Y'all, ain't, can't, don't, won't	Avoid contractions and information language	Is not, cannot, do not, would not (Don't use y'all or you all either)
Really, totally	Too informal	Utterly, wholly, entirely, purely
I, me, mine, my	Using first-person is highly discouraged	Simply avoid I and it's verb. Word your sentences in the third-person.
Any type of slang/informal language (cool, awesome, dude, flaky, cheesy, etc.)	Use formal language in academic papers.	Find a more formal word with a dictionary or thesaurus.
For all intents and purposes	Overused	Because
Due to the fact, on account of, in order to	Wordy and unnecessary	Because, since, to

Common Misuses of Words and Phrases to Avoid:

Affect/Effect: *Affect* is a verb (*affect* begins with *a* and so does *action*). *Effect* is a noun (except when discussing "effecting change" use *effect*).

I hope the medicine positively affects my condition.

The medicine had a positive effect on my condition.

Its/It's: *Its* is possessive. *It's* is a contraction of *it is*.

The couch and its cover are severely ripped.

The couple decided it's time for a new couch.

There/Their/They're: *There* is a location. *Their* is a possessive noun. *They're* is a contraction of *they are*.

My dog is over there.

Their dog is very beautiful.

They're thinking about getting another dog.

Your/You're: *You're* is the contraction of *you are*. *Your* is a possessive noun.

You're the nicest person I know.

Your demeanor has changed.

Conscience/Conscious: *Conscience* is your inner voice. *Conscious* is your state of awareness.

My conscience got the best of me and I decided not to lie to her.

I was conscious of my actions.

Every Day/Everyday: *Every day* simply means each day. *Everyday* is an adjective. If you can put the word "single" in between *every* and *day* in a sentence, use *every day*. Use *everyday* when describing something.

I go to the gym every day.

These are my everyday workout clothes.

Farther/Further: *Farther* describes physical distance. *Further* means more.

I drove farther than I had planned.

I asked the mechanic to explain the repairs further.

Cite/Site/Sight: *Cite* means to give credit to a source. *Site* is a location. *Sight* is vision through one's eyes.

The professor said to cite sources when writing our reports.

We visited the site to gain experience for our action research.

The sight of the bus after the dig was a relief to all of us.