

# The A to Z of alternative words

# Calling all writers

This guide gives hundreds of plain English alternatives to the pompous words and phrases that litter official writing. On its own the guide won't teach you how to write in plain English. There's more to it than just replacing 'hard' words with 'easy' words, and many of these alternatives won't work in every situation. But it will help if you want to get rid of words like 'notwithstanding', 'expeditiously' and phrases like 'in the majority of instances' and 'at this moment in time'. And using everyday words is an important first step towards clearer writing.

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## Using the A to Z

If you find yourself about to write, type or dictate a word you wouldn't use in every day conversation, look it up in the A to Z. You should find a simpler alternative. Often there will be a choice of several words. You need to pick the one that best fits what you are trying to say.

**A**

<b>(an) absence of</b>	<b>no, none</b>
<b>abundance</b>	<b>enough, plenty, a lot (or say how many)</b>
<b>accede to</b>	<b>allow, agree to</b>
<b>accelerate</b>	<b>speed up</b>
<b>accentuate</b>	<b>stress</b>
<b>accommodation</b>	<b>where you live, home</b>
<b>accompanying</b>	<b>with</b>
<b>accomplish</b>	<b>do, finish</b>
<b>according to our records</b>	<b>our records show</b>
<b>accordingly</b>	<b>in line with this, so</b>
<b>acknowledge</b>	<b>thank you for</b>
<b>acquaint yourself with</b>	<b>find out about, read</b>
<b>acquiesce</b>	<b>agree</b>
<b>acquire</b>	<b>buy, get</b>
<b>additional</b>	<b>extra, more</b>
<b>adjacent</b>	<b>next to</b>
<b>adjustment</b>	<b>change, alteration</b>
<b>admissible</b>	<b>allowed, acceptable</b>
<b>advantageous</b>	<b>useful, helpful</b>
<b>advise</b>	<b>tell, say (unless you are giving advice)</b>
<b>affix</b>	<b>add, write, fasten, stick on, fix to</b>
<b>afford an opportunity</b>	<b>let, allow</b>
<b>afforded</b>	<b>given</b>
<b>aforesaid</b>	<b>this, earlier in this document</b>
<b>aggregate</b>	<b>total</b>
<b>aligned</b>	<b>lined up, in line</b>
<b>alleviate</b>	<b>ease, reduce</b>

<b>allocate</b>	<b>divide, share, add, give</b>
<b>along the lines of</b>	<b>like, as in</b>
<b>alternative</b>	<b>choice, other</b>
<b>alternatively</b>	<b>or, on the other hand</b>
<b>ameliorate</b>	<b>improve, help</b>
<b>amendment</b>	<b>change</b>
<b>anticipate</b>	<b>expect</b>
<b>apparent</b>	<b>clear, plain, obvious, seeming</b>
<b>applicant (the)</b>	<b>you</b>
<b>application</b>	<b>use</b>
<b>appreciable</b>	<b>large, great</b>
<b>apprise</b>	<b>inform, tell</b>
<b>appropriate</b>	<b>proper, right, suitable</b>
<b>appropriate to</b>	<b>suitable for</b>
<b>approximately</b>	<b>about, roughly</b>
<b>as a consequence of</b>	<b>because</b>
<b>as of the date of</b>	<b>from</b>
<b>as regards</b>	<b>about, on the subject of</b>
<b>ascertain</b>	<b>find out</b>
<b>assemble</b>	<b>build, gather, put together</b>
<b>assistance</b>	<b>help</b>
<b>at an early date</b>	<b>soon (or say when)</b>
<b>at its discretion</b>	<b>can, may (or edit out)</b>
<b>at the moment</b>	<b>now (or edit out)</b>
<b>at the present time</b>	<b>now (or edit out)</b>
<b>attempt</b>	<b>try</b>
<b>attend</b>	<b>come to, go to, be at</b>
<b>attributable to</b>	<b>due to, because of</b>

**authorise**

**allow, let**

**authority  
to')**

**right, power, may (as in 'have the authority**

**axiomatic**

**obvious, goes without saying**

## B

**belated**

**late**

**beneficial**

**helpful, useful**

**bestow**

**give, award**

**breach**

**break**

**by means of**

**by**

# C

<b>calculate</b>	<b>work out, decide</b>
<b>cease</b>	<b>finish, stop, end</b>
<b>circumvent</b>	<b>get round, avoid, skirt, circle</b>
<b>clarification</b>	<b>explanation, help</b>
<b>combine</b>	<b>mix</b>
<b>combined</b>	<b>together</b>
<b>commence</b>	<b>start, begin</b>
<b>communicate</b>	<b>talk, write, telephone (be specific)</b>
<b>competent</b>	<b>able, can</b>
<b>compile</b>	<b>make, collect</b>
<b>complete</b>	<b>fill in, finish</b>
<b>completion</b>	<b>end</b>
<b>comply with</b>	<b>keep to, meet</b>
<b>component</b>	<b>part</b>
<b>comprise</b>	<b>make up, include</b>
<b>(it is) compulsory</b>	<b>(you) must</b>
<b>conceal</b>	<b>hide</b>
<b>concerning</b>	<b>about, on</b>
<b>conclusion</b>	<b>end</b>
<b>concur</b>	<b>agree</b>
<b>condition</b>	<b>rule</b>
<b>consequently</b>	<b>so</b>
<b>considerable</b>	<b>great, important</b>
<b>constitute</b>	<b>make up, form</b>
<b>construe</b>	<b>interpret</b>
<b>consult</b>	<b>talk to, meet, ask</b>

<b>consumption</b>	<b>amount used</b>
<b>contemplate</b>	<b>think about</b>
<b>contrary to</b>	<b>against, despite</b>
<b>correct</b>	<b>put right</b>
<b>correspond</b>	<b>write</b>
<b>costs the sum of</b>	<b>costs</b>
<b>counter</b>	<b>against</b>
<b>courteous</b>	<b>polite</b>
<b>cumulative</b>	<b>added up, added together</b>
<b>currently</b>	<b>now (or edit out)</b>
<b>customary</b>	<b>usual, normal</b>



## D

<b>deduct</b>	<b>take off, take away</b>
<b>deem to be</b>	<b>treat as</b>
<b>defer</b>	<b>put off, delay</b>
<b>deficiency</b>	<b>lack of</b>
<b>delete</b>	<b>cross out</b>
<b>demonstrate</b>	<b>show, prove</b>
<b>denote</b>	<b>show</b>
<b>depict</b>	<b>show</b>
<b>designate</b>	<b>point out, show, name</b>
<b>desire</b>	<b>wish, want</b>
<b>despatch or dispatch</b>	<b>send, post</b>
<b>despite the fact that</b>	<b>though, although</b>
<b>determine</b>	<b>decide, work out, set, end</b>
<b>detrimental</b>	<b>harmful, damaging</b>
<b>difficulties</b>	<b>problems</b>
<b>diminish</b>	<b>lessen, reduce</b>
<b>disburse</b>	<b>pay, pay out</b>
<b>discharge</b>	<b>carry out</b>
<b>disclose</b>	<b>tell, show</b>
<b>disconnect</b>	<b>cut off, unplug</b>
<b>discontinue</b>	<b>stop, end</b>
<b>discrete</b>	<b>separate</b>
<b>discuss</b>	<b>talk about</b>
<b>disseminate</b>	<b>spread</b>
<b>documentation</b>	<b>papers, documents</b>
<b>domiciled in</b>	<b>living in</b>

**dominant**

**main**

**due to the fact of**

**because, as**

**duration**

**time, life**

**during which time**

**while**

**dwelling**

**home**

# E

economical	cheap, good value
eligible	allowed, qualified
elucidate	explain, make clear
emphasise	stress
empower	allow, let
enable	allow
enclosed	inside, with
(please find) enclosed	I enclose
encounter	meet
endeavour	try
enquire	ask
enquiry	question
ensure	make sure
entitlement	right
envisage	expect, imagine
equivalent	equal, the same
erroneous	wrong
establish	show, find out, set up
evaluate	test, check
evinced	show, prove
ex officio	because of his or her position
exceptionally	only when, in this case
excessive	too many, too much
exclude	leave out
excluding	apart from, except
exclusively	only

**exempt from**

**free from**

**expedite**

**hurry, speed up**

**expeditiously**

**as soon as possible, quickly**

**expenditure**

**spending**

**expire**

**run out**

**extant**

**current, in force**

**extremity**

**limit**

# F

<b>fabricate</b>	<b>make, make up</b>
<b>facilitate</b>	<b>help, make possible</b>
<b>factor</b>	<b>reason</b>
<b>failure to</b>	<b>if you do not</b>
<b>finalise</b>	<b>end, finish</b>
<b>following</b>	<b>after</b>
<b>for the duration of</b>	<b>during, while</b>
<b>for the purpose of</b>	<b>to, for</b>
<b>for the reason that</b>	<b>because</b>
<b>formulate</b>	<b>plan, devise</b>
<b>forthwith</b>	<b>now, at once</b>
<b>forward</b>	<b>send</b>
<b>frequently</b>	<b>often</b>
<b>furnish</b>	<b>give</b>
<b>further to</b>	<b>after, following</b>
<b>furthermore</b>	<b>then, also, and</b>

## G

**generate**

**produce, give, make**

**give consideration to**

**consider, think about**

**grant**

**give**

# H

henceforth	from now on, from today
hereby	now, by this (or edit out)
herein	here (or edit out)
hereinafter	after this (or edit out)
hereof	of this
hereto	to this
heretofore	until now, previously
hereunder	below
herewith	with this (or edit out)
hitherto	until now
hold in abeyance	wait, postpone
hope and trust	hope, trust (but not both)

# I

if and when	if, when (but not both)
illustrate	show, explain
immediately	at once, now
implement	carry out, do
imply	suggest, hint at
in a number of cases	some (or say how many)
in accordance with	as under, in line with, because of
in addition (to)	and, as well as, also
in advance	before
in case of	if
in conjunction with	and, with
in connection with	for, about
in consequence	because, as a result
in excess of	more than
in lieu of	instead of
in order that	so that
in receipt of	get, have, receive
in relation to	about
in respect of	about, for
in the absence of	without
in the course of	while, during
in the event of/that	if
in the majority of instances	most, mostly
in the near future	soon
in the neighbourhood of	about, around
in view of the fact that	as, because



<b>inappropriate</b>	<b>wrong, unsuitable</b>
<b>inception</b>	<b>start, beginning</b>
<b>incorporating</b>	<b>which includes</b>
<b>incurred</b>	<b>have to pay, owe</b>
<b>indicate</b>	<b>show, suggest</b>
<b>inform</b>	<b>tell</b>
<b>initially</b>	<b>at first</b>
<b>initiate</b>	<b>begin, start</b>
<b>insert</b>	<b>put in</b>
<b>instances</b>	<b>cases</b>
<b>intend to</b>	<b>will</b>
<b>intimate</b>	<b>say, hint</b>
<b>irrespective of</b>	<b>despite, even if</b>
<b>is in accordance with</b>	<b>agrees with, follows</b>
<b>is of the opinion</b>	<b>thinks</b>
<b>issue</b>	<b>give, send</b>
<b>it is known that</b>	<b>I/we know that</b>

# J

**jeopardise**

**risk, threaten**

# L

(a) large number of	many, most (or say how many)
(to) liaise with	to meet with, to discuss with, to work with (whichever is more descriptive)
locality	place, area
locate	find, put

# M

magnitude	size
(it is) mandatory	(you) must
manner	way
manufacture	make
marginal	small, slight
material	relevant
materialise	happen, occur
may in the future	may, might, could
merchandise	goods
mislay	lose
modification	change
moreover	and, also, as well

# N

**negligible**

**very small**

**nevertheless**

**but, however, even so**

**notify**

**tell, let us/you know**

**notwithstanding**

**even if, despite, still, yet**

**numerous**

**many (or say how many)**

## O

<b>objective</b>	<b>aim, goal</b>
<b>(it is) obligatory</b>	<b>(you) must</b>
<b>obtain</b>	<b>get, receive</b>
<b>occasioned by</b>	<b>caused by, because of</b>
<b>on behalf of</b>	<b>for</b>
<b>on numerous occasions</b>	<b>often</b>
<b>on receipt of</b>	<b>when we/you get</b>
<b>on request</b>	<b>if you ask</b>
<b>on the grounds that</b>	<b>because</b>
<b>on the occasion that</b>	<b>when, if</b>
<b>operate</b>	<b>work, run</b>
<b>optimum</b>	<b>best, ideal</b>
<b>option</b>	<b>choice</b>
<b>ordinarily</b>	<b>normally, usually</b>
<b>otherwise</b>	<b>or</b>
<b>outstanding</b>	<b>unpaid</b>
<b>owing to</b>	<b>because of</b>

## **p**

<b>(a) percentage of</b>	<b>some (or say what percentage)</b>
<b>partially</b>	<b>partly</b>
<b>participate</b>	<b>join in, take part</b>
<b>particulars</b>	<b>details, facts</b>
<b>per annum</b>	<b>a year</b>
<b>perform</b>	<b>do</b>
<b>permissible</b>	<b>allowed</b>
<b>permit</b>	<b>let, allow</b>
<b>personnel</b>	<b>people, staff</b>
<b>persons</b>	<b>people, anyone</b>
<b>peruse</b>	<b>read, read carefully, look at</b>
<b>place</b>	<b>put</b>
<b>possess</b>	<b>have, own</b>
<b>possessions</b>	<b>belongings</b>
<b>practically</b>	<b>almost, nearly</b>
<b>predominant</b>	<b>main</b>
<b>prescribe</b>	<b>set, fix</b>
<b>preserve</b>	<b>keep, protect</b>
<b>previous</b>	<b>earlier, before, last</b>
<b>principal</b>	<b>main</b>
<b>prior to</b>	<b>before</b>
<b>proceed</b>	<b>go ahead</b>
<b>procure</b>	<b>get, obtain, arrange</b>
<b>profusion of</b>	<b>plenty, too many (or say how many)</b>
<b>(to) progress something</b>	<b>(replace with a more precise phrase saying what you are doing)</b>

<b>prohibit</b>	<b>ban, stop</b>
<b>projected</b>	<b>estimated</b>
<b>prolonged</b>	<b>long</b>
<b>promptly</b>	<b>quickly, at once</b>
<b>promulgate</b>	<b>advertise, announce</b>
<b>proportion</b>	<b>part</b>
<b>provide</b>	<b>give</b>
<b>provided that</b>	<b>if, as long as</b>
<b>provisions</b>	<b>rules, terms</b>
<b>proximity</b>	<b>closeness, nearness</b>
<b>purchase</b>	<b>buy</b>
<b>pursuant to</b>	<b>under, because of, in line with</b>



## Q

**qualify for**

**can get, be able to get**

# R

reconsider	think again about, look again at
reduce	cut
reduction	cut
referred to as	called
refer to	talk about, mention
(have) regard to	take into account
regarding	about, on
regulation	rule
reimburse	repay, pay back
reiterate	repeat, restate
relating to	about
remain	stay
remainder	the rest, what is left
remittance	payment
remuneration	pay, wages, salary
render	make, give, send
represent	show, stand for, be
request	ask, question
require	need, want, force
requirements	needs, rules
reside	live
residence	home, where you live
restriction	limit
retain	keep
review	look at (again)
revised	new, changed

# S

<b>said/such/same</b>	<b>the, this, that</b>
<b>scrutinise</b>	<b>read (look at) carefully</b>
<b>select</b>	<b>choose</b>
<b>settle</b>	<b>pay</b>
<b>similarly</b>	<b>also, in the same way</b>
<b>solely</b>	<b>only</b>
<b>specified</b>	<b>given, written, set</b>
<b>state</b>	<b>say, tell us, write down</b>
<b>statutory</b>	<b>legal, by law</b>
<b>subject to</b>	<b>depending on, under, keeping to</b>
<b>submit</b>	<b>send, give</b>
<b>subsequent to/upon</b>	<b>after</b>
<b>subsequently</b>	<b>later</b>
<b>substantial</b>	<b>large, great, a lot of</b>
<b>substantially</b>	<b>more or less</b>
<b>sufficient</b>	<b>enough</b>
<b>supplement</b>	<b>go with, add to</b>
<b>supplementary</b>	<b>extra, more</b>
<b>supply</b>	<b>give, sell, delivery</b>

# T

(the) tenant	you
terminate	stop, end
that being the case	if so
the question as to whether	whether
thereafter	then, afterwards
thereby	by that, because of that
therein	in that, there
thereof	of that
thereto	to that
thus	so, therefore
to date	so far, up to now
to the extent that	if, when
transfer	change, move
transmit	send

# U

<b>ultimately</b>	<b>in the end, finally</b>
<b>unavailability</b>	<b>lack of</b>
<b>undernoted</b>	<b>the following</b>
<b>undersigned</b>	<b>I, we</b>
<b>undertake</b>	<b>agree, promise, do</b>
<b>uniform</b>	<b>same, similar</b>
<b>unilateral</b>	<b>one-sided, one-way</b>
<b>unoccupied</b>	<b>empty</b>
<b>until such time</b>	<b>until</b>
<b>utilisation</b>	<b>use</b>
<b>utilise</b>	<b>use</b>

# V

**variation**

**change**

**virtually**

**almost (or edit out)**

**visualise**

**see, predict**

# W

ways and means

ways

we have pleasure in

we are glad to

whatsoever

whatever, what, any

whenever

when

whereas

but

whether or not

whether

with a view to

to, so that

with effect from

from

with reference to

about

with regard to

about, for

with respect to

about, for

with the minimum of delay

quickly (or say when)

# Y

**you are requested**

**please**

**your attention is drawn**

**please see, please note**



# Z

**zone**

**area, region**

# Words and phrases to avoid

The words and phrases below often crop up in letters and reports. Often you can remove them from a sentence without changing the meaning or the tone. In other words, they add nothing to the message. Try leaving them out of your writing. You'll find your sentences survive and succeed without them.

- a total of
- absolutely
- abundantly
- actually
- all things being equal
- as a matter of fact
- as far as I am concerned
- at the end of the day
- at this moment in time
- basically
- current
- currently
- during the period from
- each and every one
- existing
- extremely
- I am of the opinion that
- I would like to say
- I would like to take this opportunity to
- in due course
- in the end
- in the final analysis
- in this connection
- in total
- in view of the fact that
- it should be understood
- last but not least
- obviously
- of course
- other things being equal
- quite
- really
- really quite
- regarding the (noun), it was
- the fact of the matter is
- the month(s) of
- to all intents and purposes
- to one's own mind
- very

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