



**CONSULTING GROUP<sup>SM</sup>**  
the people side of business strategy

# TiDbits on writing<sup>®</sup>

## part 10

### LETTER FROM TD

**W**e hope you enjoy Part 10 of our series, *TiDbits on Writing*<sup>®</sup>.

Our goal is to give you helpful guidance on writing topics that cause most writers difficulty. These quick, one-page tidbits remedy the common stumbling blocks to good writing — and when put to good use — make writing easier for the writer and better for the reader.

Happy reading . . . and happy writing! Let us know what you think.

— *Laura Winterroth*  
Managing Director



For back issues of *TiDbits on Writing*<sup>®</sup> or to order *Editor's Secrets: 10 Keys to Stronger Writing in 30 Minutes* (\$12.95), go to [www.tdgroupusa.com](http://www.tdgroupusa.com).

## Cut the Fat!

**B**revity is the soul of wit. It is also the soul of good writing. Verbal clutter wastes your energy, tries your reader's patience, and obscures your message. Get rid of it. Scour your work and follow these rules:

- ◆ Eliminate “noise” and claptrap.
- ◆ Steer clear of clichés.
- ◆ Avoid redundancy.
- ◆ Don't use the same term or phrase over and over again.

### Noise

Like fillers or “noise” in speech — *er, um, well* — writers use “noise” of their own: useless words and phrases that serve no purpose.

*Pursuant to your request*, I'm sending this material.

I'm sending the material you requested.

If you have a problem, *please don't hesitate to call me*.

Please call me if you have a problem.

Jane was *very* artistic and *really* creative.

Jane was artistic and creative.

### Clichés

Clichés are deadbeats that do no work; they just fill space. People use them because they're safe and familiar — a deadly combination for any writer.

*A blessing in disguise*, his firing set him on the path to *fame and fortune*.

Rather than depressing him, his firing spurred successful new ventures.

### Redundancy

Don't overstate the obvious.

*His efforts ended in dismal failure.*

He failed.

The automobile was *totally* destroyed.

The car was destroyed.

### Overuse of the Same Term

Repeating a word or phrase multiple times lacks imagination and bores your reader. Spice things up with synonyms.

He placed the *statue* on his mantle so he could see it whenever he entered the room. It was more than a *statue*; it was a reminder of his prowess as a track and field star. Won so long ago, this *statue* symbolized his ability to achieve whatever he set out to do.

He placed the *trophy* on his mantle so he could see it whenever he entered the room. It was more than a *statue*; it was a reminder of his prowess as a track and field star. Won so long ago, this *award* symbolized his ability to achieve whatever he set out to do.

At the end of the day, curtailing excessive verbiage in your writing is the bottom line to achieving writing success beyond your wildest dreams. (If the sentence you just read troubles you, you've gotten the point!) □

## TiDbits

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