



Dear Reader,

Happy first birthday to **EC Buzz**! Yet in typical buzzword-speak, we've still only touched the "tip of the iceberg" when it comes to removing impediments to clear concise English. Next month we'll do a roundup of pet peeves received from readers, but right now you can find out if you're pleonastic - not some dreadful congenital deformity, but a tendency to use superfluous extra redundant words that aren't needed and you're better off without.



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### Redundant words you can do without

Expressions containing superfluous words are occasionally useful for effect or emphasis (as in Yogi Berra's famous utterance "It's déjà vu all over again"). More frequently, they're a hallmark of cloudy thinking and sloppy writing that busy readers find irritating. Here are a dozen common expressions in which the qualifying word in italics should be declared redundant:

1. **Added bonus** : A bonus is already an addition to the standard deal.
2. **Advance notice** : Notice isn't usually given after the fact.
3. **Basic fundamentals** : Fundamentals are always basic.
4. **Empty space** : If it wasn't empty, it wouldn't be a space.
5. **End result** : Results don't usually come at the beginning.
6. **Free gift** : If it's a gift, it's free.
7. **Future plans** : All plans are made for the future.
8. **Highly unique** : There aren't different degrees of uniqueness.
9. **Honest truth** : When is the truth ever dishonest?
10. **Join together** : It's pretty hard to join things apart.
11. **New breakthrough** : Ever heard of an old breakthrough?
12. **Past experience** : If it's an experience, it's already happened.

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### Buzz Off : *Mission-critical*

Describing some business operation as "mission-critical" is just a dramatic way of emphasizing that it's vital or very important. Unfortunately, this expression has picked up a pompous air through overuse in contexts that – with all due respect – aren't exactly rocket science. So unless you work at NASA, it's advisable to abort lift-off of this cliché immediately.

Instead of using "mission-critical", launch one of the following:

- "essential"
- "indispensable"
- "crucial"

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Is there a buzzword you would like to banish? Send your suggestion to [writer@ecwriting.com](mailto:writer@ecwriting.com), then look for your buzzword and name in an upcoming issue.

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### Parting Words

"One of the really bad things you can do to your writing is to dress up the vocabulary, looking for long words because you're maybe a little bit ashamed of your short ones."

– Stephen King, author