

To implement this technique, simply perform the 'Find' function for each word and see for yourself if your uses are necessary or instructive. You will, of course, need to make the appropriate adjustments for pieces written in the first or second person.

The hope is that, once you become accustomed to catching yourself in these areas, you will naturally train yourself to avoid using them in the future. The situation is analogous to the way a spell check, properly used, can make one a better speller. Performing this task through a few dozen pages of writing is a species of mini-course in writing—both humbling and empowering!

**Good luck!**

# *The Writing Centre*



## **A Word-Based Style Editing Tool for Writers**

There are commonly overused words and phrases that tend to numb and deaden fictional prose. One way to edit for them is to use your word processor's 'Edit/Find' function to do flash revisions on the fly. Please find below a list, by no mean comprehensive, of a dozen or so of the main offenders, which tend to slip into our work through laziness or inattention:

as he/as she/of them/  
already/really/very/all/big/little/many  
/some/  
a lot/like/seemed/felt/that he/that  
she/  
as though/to him/to her/as if/just

"It was very hot." The 'very' is unconvincing. "John cried as he talked about his wife." Better to write, "Talking about his wife, John cried." Et cetera.

The characteristic most of these words share is  
vagueness.