

THE ELIMINATION OF UNNECESSARY WORDS

Eliminating unnecessary (useless) words is an important step in revising a composition. Indeed, it is one of the surest ways of improving the quality of your writing.

In the following paragraph, draw a line through the word(s) that are either repetitive or superfluous.

Let us see how dictionaries are made; let us see how the editors arrive at definitions.

What follows in this paragraph and in succeeding paragraphs applies, incidentally, only to those dictionary offices where first-hand, original research goes on—it does not apply to those dictionary offices in which editors simply copy existing dictionaries. The task of writing a dictionary commences and begins with the reading of vast amounts of the written literature of the period or subject that it is intended and planned to cover. As the dictionary editors read the literature of the period or subject, they copy every unusual or peculiar occurrence of a common word, they copy a large number of common words in their everyday, ordinary uses, and they also copy the sentences in which each of these words occurs and appears.

Unnecessary repetition. In the first sentence, there is no reason to repeat the words let us see, which merely slows down the reader without giving him/her any additional information. Nor is there any point in using the verb commences in the third sentence; begins means precisely the same thing. Find SIX other examples of unnecessary repetition.

Superfluous Words. The phrase in this paragraph and in the succeeding paragraphs is superfluous. The reader does not need to be given that information; he/she already knows it or will soon discover it. The word written is superfluous before literature. Literature is assumed to be written unless specifically defined otherwise. Find TWO other examples of crossed out superfluous words.