

Suzan Lauder's 100-word Editing Checklist

To improve the structure, reduce passive wording, remove muddy words, etc., search for the following and cut, reword, or be more specific:

ing_	ly (minimize adverbs)
That	Like (alternatives: as if, enjoy)
Very_	to (for seems to, appears to)
From	Some (including something, somebody, someone)
ed_to	Any (anything, anybody, anyone, anyways)
Just	thing (Alternatives: tale, story, specify the item)
Quite	About (Alternatives: concerning, regarding, on, around)
Who is	There (there are, were, was, is)
By	It (it is, was, was as if)
Also	Being, to be
Perhaps	A bit, a lot, a little
Based	On, off, in, over, up, down, out
Whole	Of (most of, much of, first of, of the, of all, off of)
Much	Would be able to, was able to = could
All	Had (had been, etc.) has, have
Such	Nice (for friendly)
Among(st)	Begin/began/begun to...

Notes:

- Using MS Word, use “Find” function and type in words or letters in the list. Consider cutting or rewording to clarify, tighten up, or add interest to your prose.
- I’ve shown an underline for use of a space so words that are not problematic will be weeded out to make the search faster. The down side is the underline may weed out instances of punctuation like a comma, period, etc. after the word/set of letters.
- Parts of this section are derived from the book *Editor-Proof Your Writing: 21 Steps to the Clear Prose Publishers and Agents Crave* by Don McNair (highly recommended reading!).

Also check for clichés!

Non-ly adverbs (minimize):

Afterwards	Almost	Always	Even
Far	Fast	Less	More
Not	Often	Seldom	Too
Well	Upbeat	Upside down	Upward
Etc. etc.			

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My worst redundant words

Then (alternatives: at length, finally, but, next, yet at the time, followed by.)

Look (looked, looking) (alternatives appear, seem; regular synonyms like glimpse, stare, gape, etc.)

Act (acted) (alternatives: behave, say, think, show, present); action (Alternatives: behaviour, conduct, decisions, mistakes); acted on=engaged in.

Filter words that take away from Deep POV (third person multiple, one POV at a time, no head-hopping):

He, she, I (POV person) plus the following verbs:

- Thinking verbs such as felt, thought, knew, noted, noticed, wanted, hoped, wondered, pondered, decided, understood, considered, believed, realized, etc.
- Direct sensing words like saw, watched, watched as, smelled, listened, heard, sensed, etc. (senses should be in description not direct)
- Could/would/should +senses or +to be or a known situation
- “Would have” in the dependent part of the sentence.

In dialogue or internal thoughts for the POV character, or in first person:
I think, know, feel, sounded, etc.

Easy way to fix: Cut I knew, use “to be” statements, or change the sentence to a question.

Note:

- Parts of this section are derived from *Rivet Your Readers with Deep Point of View* by Jill Elizabeth Nelson.