

# Exercise 5. Word Usage: Warning Words & Phrases<sup>1</sup>



Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Scientists have adhered to four general style guidelines in their professional writing:

1. Write simply, concisely, and logically.
2. Check the meaning and relationships of every word.
3. Find and release hidden verbs of action.
4. Split up noun clusters and stacked modifiers.

Often the expressions below are to be avoided, *though not always and not at all costs*. Insert in the table your suggested substitutions. The rule to follow is: If you see these words or phrases in your drafts, think hard about whether you are justified in using them!

<b>Avoid</b>	<b>Usually prefer</b>	<b>Avoid</b>	<b>Usually prefer</b>
anticipate		for the reason that	
approximate		greater/higher number of	
approximately		if conditions are such that	
as already stated		in a considerable number of cases	
as can be seen from Fig. 1 growth...		in all cases	
as far as our own observations are concerned, they show		(adjective) in character	
as of now		in comparison to	
at some future time		increased relative to	
the authors		in excess of	
based on		in terms of	
the case		in view of the fact that	
red in color		it has long been known that	
commence		it is of interest to note that	
comparable		it is often the case that	
conducted inoculation experiments		it is possible (probable) that	
considerable amount of		it may however be noted that	
considerable number/proportion of		it seems to the present writer	
decreased number of		it will be seen on Table 5	
decreased relative to		it would thus appear that	
demonstrate		large number(s) of	
due to		large proportion of	
due to the fact that		less	
during the time that		lesser extent/lesser degree	
elevated		level	
employ		majority of	
encounter		moment in time	
exhibit		multiple, number of	



# Exercise 5. Word Usage: Warning Words & Phrases<sup>1</sup>



Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Avoid</b>	<b>Usually prefer</b>	<b>Avoid</b>	<b>Usually prefer</b>
fewer in number		following	
of such strength that		<b>(Insert your habitually misused words or phrases now in this column.)</b>	<b>(Insert better words to substitute for your habitually misused words.)</b>
order of magnitude greater than			
owing to the fact that			
parameter			
prior to			
proportion of			
quite			
rather			
relatively			
respectively			
reveal			
square (round, etc.) in shape			
significant			
sophisticated			
sufficient number of			
terminate			
there is; there are			
... are both alike			
upon			
use, using			
utilize, utilization			
very			
while, whilst			
with regard to			
number of			
of large size			

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Peter F. Woodford., *How to Teach Scientific Communication*, "Appendix 3: Warning words and phrases" (Reston, VA: Council of Biology Editors, Inc., 1999), 172–174. Used by permissions granted in the Preface.

