

The Secret to the Find and Refine Method™

(Report # 112 by Bobbie Christmas)

“Style often applies more to what you take out of your writing than what you put in.” –Bobbie Christmas

Write In Style (Union Square Publishing) by Bobbie Christmas outlines and explains dozens of words and phrases that point to “missed opportunities for improvement.” The Find and Refine Method™ that Bobbie created, as explained in her book, shows writers of fiction and nonfiction how to find their “missed opportunities for improvement” with almost any word-processing program. Once writers find those words and phrases, they have the option of leaving the writing as it is or refining their words to make their writing stronger, more powerful, and more stylish.

The Find and Refine Method™ takes advantage of the “Find” function available in almost every word-processing program. To find a word or phrase you want, go to the Edit menu, pull it down, and click on Find. Fill in the words, phrases, or letters detailed in *Write In Style*, and your computer will stop on each instance. You then have the opportunity to examine each usage and decide the following:

1. Have I used this word too often? If so, find another word to replace it in a few places.
2. Have I used this word correctly? If not, change it to the correct word choice.
3. Does this word or phrase represent a missed opportunity for improvement in any way? If so, follow the recommendations explained further in *Write In Style*.
4. Can I delete this word without harming the meaning of the sentence? If so, delete it.
5. Is this word or phrase a cliché? If so, rewrite or delete it.
6. Is this sentence in passive voice? If so, and if possible, rewrite it.
7. Is this attribution inverted? If so, rewrite it.
8. Have I used attributions too often? If so, replace some with sentences that depict action, body language, or another visual aspect.
9. Are the characters calling each other by name too often? If so, delete some instances.
10. Is this word redundant? If so, delete it.

Write In Style explains “missed opportunities for improvement” in detail, lists and explains many words, letters, phrases, and other things you can Find and Refine. It also gives exercises that allow you to practice your newfound ability to find missed opportunities and be objective about what you edit.

For more information, buy *Write In Style* in your bookstore or order it at www.zebraeditor.com. Go to the Website and click on Tools for Writers. While you’re on the Website, be sure to sign up for the free Writers Network News e-zine. It comes to your computer filled with tips, answers, and news of interest to writers around the globe.