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The A - Z of alternative words

**Calling all writers**

This guide gives hundreds of plain English alternatives to the pompous words and phrases that litter official writing. On its own the guide won’t teach you how to write in plain English. There’s more to it than just replacing ‘hard’ words with ‘easy’ words, and many of these alternatives won’t work in every situation. But it will help if you want to get rid of words like ‘notwithstanding’, ‘expeditiously’ and phrases like ‘in the majority of instances’ and ‘ at this moment in time’. And using everyday words is an important first step towards clearer writing.

**Using the A to Z**

If you find yourself about to write, type or dictate a word you wouldn’t use in every day conversation, look it up in the A to Z. You should find a simpler alternative. Often there will be a choice of several words. You need to pick the one that best fits what you are trying to say.

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(Use the alphabetical links to jump to that letter.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **A** |   |
| **(an) absence of** | no, none |
| **abundance** | enough, plenty, a lot (or say how many) |
| **accede to** | allow, agree to |
| **accelerate** | speed up |
| **accentuate** | stress |
| **accommodation** | where you live, home |
| **accompanying** | with |
| **accomplish** | do, finish |
| **according to our records** | our records show |
| **accordingly** | in line with this, so |
| **acknowledge** | thank you for |
| **acquaint yourself with** | find out about, read |
| **acquiesce** | agree |
| **acquire** | buy, get |
| **additional** | extra, more |
| **adjacent** | next to |
| **adjustment** | change, alteration |
| **admissible** | allowed, acceptable |
| **advantageous** | useful, helpful |
| **advise** | tell, say (unless you are giving advice) |
| **affix** | add, write, fasten, stick on, fix to |
| **afford an opportunity** | let, allow |
| **afforded** | given |
| **aforesaid** | this, earlier in this document |
| **aggregate** | total |
| **aligned** | lined up, in line |
| **alleviate** | ease, reduce |
| **allocate** | divide, share, give |
| **along the lines of** | like, as in |
| **alternative** | (a) choice, (the) other |
| **alternatively** | or, on the other hand |
| **ameliorate** | improve, help |
| **amendment** | change |
| **anticipate** | expect |
| **apparent** | clear, plain, obvious, seeming |
| **applicant (the)** | you |
| **application** | use |
| **appreciable** | large, great |
| **apprise** | inform, tell |
| **appropriate** | proper, right, suitable |
| **appropriate to** | suitable for |
| **approximately** | about, roughly |
| **as a consequence of** | because |
| **as of the date of** | from |
| **as regards** | about, on the subject of |
| **ascertain** | find out |
| **assemble** | build, gather, put together |
| **assistance** | help |
| **at an early date** | soon (or say when) |
| **at its discretion** | can, may (or edit out) |
| **at the moment** | now (or edit out) |
| **at the present time** | now (or edit out) |
| **attempt** | try |
| **attend** | come to, go to, be at |
| **attributable to** | due to, because of |
| **authorise** | allow, let |
| **authority** | right, power, may (as in 'have the authority to') |
| **axiomatic** | obvious, goes without saying |
| **B** |   |
| **belated** | late |
| **beneficial** | helpful, useful |
| **bestow** | give, award |
| **breach** | break |
| **by means of** | by |
| **C** |   |
| **calculate** | work out, decide |
| **cease** | finish, stop, end |
| **circumvent** | get round, avoid, skirt, circle |
| **clarification** | explanation, help |
| **combine** | mix |
| **combined** | together |
| **commence** | start, begin |
| **communicate** | talk, write, telephone (be specific) |
| **competent** | able, can |
| **compile** | make, collect |
| **complete** | fill in, finish |
| **completion** | end |
| **comply with** | keep to, meet |
| **component** | part |
| **comprises** | is made up of, includes |
| **(it is) compulsory** | (you) must |
| **conceal** | hide |
| **concerning** | about, on |
| **conclusion** | end |
| **concur** | agree |
| **condition** | rule |
| **consequently** | so |
| **considerable** | great, important |
| **constitutes** | makes up, forms, is |
| **construe** | interpret |
| **consult** | talk to, meet, ask |
| **consumption** | amount used |
| **contemplate** | think about |
| **contrary to** | against, despite |
| **correct** | put right |
| **correspond** | write |
| **costs the sum of** | costs |
| **counter** | against |
| **courteous** | polite |
| **cumulative** | added up, added together |
| **currently** | now (or edit out) |
| **customary** | usual, normal |
| **D** |   |
| **deduct** | take off, take away |
| **deem to be** | treat as |
| **defer** | put off, delay |
| **deficiency** | lack of |
| **delete** | cross out |
| **demonstrate** | show, prove |
| **denote** | show |
| **depict** | show |
| **designate** | point out, show, name |
| **desire** | wish, want |
| **despatch or dispatch** | send, post |
| **despite the fact that** | though, although |
| **determine** | decide, work out, set, end |
| **detrimental** | harmful, damaging |
| **difficulties** | problems |
| **diminish** | lessen, reduce |
| **disburse** | pay, pay out |
| **discharge** | carry out |
| **disclose** | tell, show |
| **disconnect** | cut off, unplug |
| **discontinue** | stop, end |
| **discrete** | separate |
| **discuss** | talk about |
| **disseminate** | spread |
| **documentation** | papers, documents |
| **domiciled in** | living in |
| **dominant** | main |
| **due to the fact that** | because, as |
| **duration** | time, life |
| **during which time** | while |
| **dwelling** | home |
| **E** |   |
| **economical** | cheap, good value |
| **eligible** | allowed, qualified |
| **elucidate** | explain, make clear |
| **emphasise** | stress |
| **empower** | allow, let |
| **enable** | allow |
| **enclosed** | inside, with |
| **(please find) enclosed** | I enclose |
| **encounter** | meet |
| **endeavour** | try |
| **enquire** | ask |
| **enquiry** | question |
| **ensure** | make sure |
| **entitlement** | right |
| **envisage** | expect, imagine |
| **equivalent** | equal, the same |
| **erroneous** | wrong |
| **establish** | show, find out, set up |
| **evaluate** | test, check |
| **evince** | show, prove |
| **ex officio** | because of his or her position |
| **exceptionally** | only when, in this case |
| **excessive** | too many, too much |
| **exclude** | leave out |
| **excluding** | apart from, except |
| **exclusively** | only |
| **exempt from** | free from |
| **expedite** | hurry, speed up |
| **expeditiously** | as soon as possible, quickly |
| **expenditure** | spending |
| **expire** | run out |
| **extant** | current, in force |
| **extremity** | limit |
| **F** |   |
| **fabricate** | make, make up |
| **facilitate** | help, make possible |
| **factor** | reason |
| **failure to** | if you do not |
| **finalise** | end, finish |
| **following** | after |
| **for the duration of** | during, while |
| **for the purpose of** | to, for |
| **for the reason that** | because |
| **formulate** | plan, devise |
| **forthwith** | now, at once |
| **forward** | send |
| **frequently** | often |
| **furnish** | give |
| **further to** | after, following |
| **furthermore** | then, also, and |
| **G** |   |
| **generate** | produce, give, make |
| **give consideration to** | consider, think about |
| **grant** | give |
| **H** |   |
| **henceforth** | from now on, from today |
| **hereby** | now, by this (or edit out) |
| **herein** | here (or edit out) |
| **hereinafter** | after this (or edit out) |
| **hereof** | of this |
| **hereto** | to this |
| **heretofore** | until now, previously |
| **hereunder** | below |
| **herewith** | with this (or edit out) |
| **hitherto** | until now |
| **hold in abeyance** | wait, postpone |
| **hope and trust** | hope, trust (but not both) |
| **I** |   |
| **if and when** | if, when (but not both) |
| **illustrate** | show, explain |
| **immediately** | at once, now |
| **implement** | carry out, do |
| **imply** | suggest, hint at |
| **in a number of cases** | some (or say how many) |
| **in accordance with** | as under, in line with, because of |
| **in addition (to)** | and, as well as, also |
| **in advance** | before |
| **in case of** | if |
| **in conjunction with** | and, with |
| **in connection with** | for, about |
| **in consequence** | because, as a result |
| **in excess of** | more than |
| **in lieu of** | instead of |
| **in order that** | so that |
| **in receipt of** | get, have, receive |
| **in relation to** | about |
| **in respect of** | about, for |
| **in the absence of** | without |
| **in the course of** | while, during |
| **in the event of/that** | if |
| **in the majority of instances** | most, mostly |
| **in the near future** | soon |
| **in the neighbourhood of** | about, around |
| **in view of the fact that** | as, because |
| **inappropriate** | wrong, unsuitable |
| **inception** | start, beginning |
| **incorporating** | which includes |
| **incur** | have to pay, owe |
| **indicate** | show, suggest |
| **inform** | tell |
| **initially** | at first |
| **initiate** | begin, start |
| **insert** | put in |
| **instances** | cases |
| **intend to** | will |
| **intimate** | say, hint |
| **irrespective of** | despite, even if |
| **is of the opinion** | thinks |
| **issue** | give, send |
| **it is known that** | I/we know that |
| **J** |   |
| **jeopardise** | risk, threaten |
| **L** |   |
| **(a) large number of** | many, most (or say how many) |
| **locality** | place, area |
| **locate** | find, put |
| **M** |   |
| **magnitude** | size |
| **(it is) mandatory** | (you) must |
| **manner** | way |
| **manufacture** | make |
| **marginal** | small, slight |
| **material** | relevant |
| **materialise** | happen, occur |
| **may in the future** | may, might, could |
| **merchandise** | goods |
| **mislay** | lose |
| **modification** | change |
| **moreover** | and, also, as well |
| **N** |   |
| **negligible** | very small |
| **nevertheless** | but, however, even so |
| **notify** | tell, let us (or you) know |
| **notwithstanding** | even if, despite, still, yet |
| **numerous** | many (or say how many) |
| **O** |   |
| **objective** | aim, goal |
| **(it is) obligatory** | (you) must |
| **obtain** | get, receive |
| **occasioned by** | caused by, because of |
| **on behalf of** | for |
| **on numerous occasions** | often |
| **on request** | if you ask |
| **on the grounds that** | because |
| **on the occasion that** | when, if |
| **operate** | work, run |
| **optimum** | best, ideal |
| **option** | choice |
| **ordinarily** | normally, usually |
| **otherwise** | or |
| **outstanding** | unpaid |
| **owing to** | because of |
| **P** |   |
| **partially** | partly |
| **participate** | join in, take part |
| **particulars** | details, facts |
| **per annum** | a year |
| **perform** | do |
| **permissible** | allowed |
| **permit** | let, allow |
| **personnel** | people, staff |
| **persons** | people, anyone |
| **peruse** | read, read carefully, look at |
| **place** | put |
| **possess** | have, own |
| **possessions** | belongings |
| **practically** | almost, nearly |
| **predominant** | main |
| **prescribe** | set, fix |
| **preserve** | keep, protect |
| **previous** | earlier, before, last |
| **principal** | main |
| **prior to** | before |
| **proceed** | go ahead |
| **procure** | get, obtain, arrange |
| **profusion of** | plenty, too many (or say how many) |
| **prohibit** | ban, stop |
| **projected** | estimated |
| **prolonged** | long |
| **promptly** | quickly, at once |
| **promulgate** | advertise, announce |
| **proportion** | part |
| **provide** | give |
| **provided that** | if, as long as |
| **provisions** | rules, terms |
| **proximity** | closeness, nearness |
| **purchase** | buy |
| **pursuant to** | under, because of, in line with |
| **R** |   |
| **reconsider** | think again about, look again at |
| **reduce** | cut |
| **reduction** | cut |
| **referred to as** | called |
| **refers to** | talks about, mentions |
| **(have) regard to** | take into account |
| **regarding** | about, on |
| **regulation** | rule |
| **reimburse** | repay, pay back |
| **reiterate** | repeat, restate |
| **relating to** | about |
| **remain** | stay |
| **remainder** | the rest, what is left |
| **remittance** | payment |
| **remuneration** | pay, wages, salary |
| **render** | make, give, send |
| **report** | tell |
| **represents** | shows, stands for, is |
| **request** | ask, question |
| **require** | need, want, force |
| **requirements** | needs, rules |
| **reside** | live |
| **residence** | home, where you live |
| **restriction** | limit |
| **retain** | keep |
| **review** | look at (again) |
| **revised** | new, changed |
| **S** |   |
| **said/such/same** | the, this, that |
| **scrutinise** | read (look at) carefully |
| **select** | choose |
| **settle** | pay |
| **similarly** | also, in the same way |
| **solely** | only |
| **specified** | given, written, set |
| **state** | say, tell us, write down |
| **statutory** | legal, by law |
| **subject to** | depending on, under, keeping to |
| **submit** | send, give |
| **subsequent to/upon** | after |
| **subsequently** | later |
| **substantial** | large, great, a lot of |
| **substantially** | more or less |
| **sufficient** | enough |
| **supplement** | go with, add to |
| **supplementary** | extra, more |
| **supply** | give, sell, deliver |
| **T** |   |
| **(the) tenant** | you |
| **terminate** | stop, end |
| **that being the case** | if so |
| **the question as to whether** | whether |
| **thereafter** | then, afterwards |
| **thereby** | by that, because of that |
| **therein** | in that, there |
| **thereof** | of that |
| **thereto** | to that |
| **thus** | so, therefore |
| **to date** | so far, up to now |
| **to the extent that** | if, when |
| **transfer** | change, move |
| **transmit** | send |
| **U** |   |
| **ultimately** | in the end, finally |
| **unavailability** | lack of |
| **undernoted** | the following |
| **undersigned** | I, we |
| **undertake** | agree, promise, do |
| **uniform** | same, similar |
| **unilateral** | one-sided, one-way |
| **unoccupied** | empty |
| **until such time** | until |
| **utilisation** | use |
| **utilise** | use |
| **V** |   |
| **variation** | change |
| **virtually** | almost (or edit out) |
| **visualise** | see, predict |
| **W** |   |
| **ways and means** | ways |
| **we have pleasure in** | we are glad to |
| **whatsoever** | whatever, what, any |
| **whensoever** | when |
| **whereas** | but |
| **whether or not** | whether |
| **with a view to** | to, so that |
| **with effect from** | from |
| **with reference to** | about |
| **with regard to** | about, for |
| **with respect to** | about, for |
| **with the minimum of delay** | quickly (or say when) |
| **Y** |   |
| **you are requested** | please |
| **your attention is drawn to** | please see, please note |
| **Z** |   |
| **zone** | area, region |

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A-Z of alternative words

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