9: Cut the Fluff

Cutting the fluff is about removing unnecessary words, simplifying language, and highlighting the essentials. This approach ensures that your work is easy to understand, impactful, and focused on what matters most.

By eliminating filler, you create a message that's concise and compelling, helping decision-makers quickly grasp your key points without distraction.

Identify the core message, focus on essential points, trim extra words, and use simple, direct language.

Step-by-Step Guide

Step 1: Identify the Core Message

Identifying your core message gives you a clear focal point, allowing you to trim anything that doesn't directly support this main idea.

In one or two sentences, describe the primary point of your work. This should capture the essence of what you're trying to communicate.

Guiding Question: *What's the main point of my work, in its simplest form?*

Tips for Finding the Core Message:

- **Think Big Picture**: Summarize your work as if you were explaining it to someone in 30 seconds.
- **Ask Why**: Why does this work matter? Why should someone care? This helps you identify the primary focus.
- **Stay Brief**: Keep it to one or two sentences—brevity keeps your message focused and impactful.

"The core message of this work is…"

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Step 2: Highlight Key Points Only

Focusing on key points helps you avoid overwhelming your audience with unnecessary details. Instead, you'll provide a streamlined message with only the essentials.

Go through your work and identify the 3–5 key points that directly support your core message. If a point doesn't contribute significantly, consider removing or condensing it.

Guiding Question: *What are the 3–5 points that are essential to my message?*

Tips for Highlighting Key Points:

- **Look for Value**: Focus on the points that offer the most value to your audience.
- **Be Selective**: If a detail doesn't directly support the core message, it may not be necessary.
- **Group Related Ideas**: If you have similar points, consider combining them for simplicity.

"The essential points to include are…"

Step 3: Cut 30% of the Words

Trimming unnecessary words creates a more direct, effective message. Cutting 30% might seem tough, but it helps you focus on essentials, making the work lean and clear.

Go through a section of your work and aim to reduce it by 30%. Focus on eliminating repetitive language, filler words, or unnecessary adjectives. Be strict with yourself to maintain clarity.

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Guiding Question: *How can I cut unnecessary words while preserving the core message?*

Tips for Cutting Words:

- **Remove Repetition**: Avoid saying the same thing in different ways.
- **Cut Filler Words**: Words like "very," "actually," and "just" often add little value.
- **Be Concise**: Look for ways to shorten long sentences without losing meaning.

"Eliminate any word that doesn't serve the core message…"

Step 4: Use Direct, Simple Language

Simple, direct language ensures that your message is accessible to everyone. Avoiding jargon and complex words helps your audience quickly grasp the main points.

Replace any jargon or complex language with clear, everyday words. Imagine explaining your work to a friend or colleague without special terminology.

Guiding Question: *How would I explain this to someone unfamiliar with the topic?*

Tips for Simplifying Language:

- **Avoid Technical Jargon**: Use everyday language whenever possible.
- **Choose Simple Synonyms**: Instead of "facilitate," say "help" or "support."
- **Be Conversational**: Write as if you're having a straightforward conversation with someone.

"Replace jargon with clear, everyday language…"

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