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Some Elements of Effective Style

Short words. Short words are preferable to long ones if shorter word is equally precise. Familiar words. Readers want information that they can grasp easily and quickly. Simple, familiar words provide clarity and impact. Specific rather than general words. Specific terms pinpoint meaning and create word pictures; general terms may be fuzzy and open to varied interpretations. Brisk opening. Plunge into your subject in the first paragraph of the article. Limited use of modifying words and phrases. Check your adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases. If they are not needed, strike them out. No unnecessary repetition. An idea may be repeated for emphasis—so long as that repetition is effective. Short sentence length. Twenty words or less is recommended. Rambling sentences cluttered with subordinate clauses and other modifiers are hard to read and may cause readers to lose their train of thought. Short sentences should, however, be balanced with somewhat longer ones to avoid monotony. Paragraphs. Break up long sections into paragraphs but avoid the use of single sentence paragraphs. Restraint. Writers who use flamboyant words or overstate their proposition or conclusions discredit themselves. Facts speak for themselves. Clearly stated conclusions. Don’t hedge. If you don’t know something, say so.
Objectionable Terms
The following are selected objectionable terms and their proper substitutes. For a complete list of approved prosthodontic terminology, consult the eighth edition of the *Glossary of Prosthodontic Terms* (J Prosthet Dent 2005;94:10-92).

Or visit JPD [http://www.prosdent.org](http://www.prosdent.org) and click on Collections/Glossary of Prosthodontic Terms.

Alginate *use* Irreversible hydrocolloid Bite *use* Occlusion Bridge *use* Partial fixed dental prosthesis Case *use* Patient, situation, or treatment as appropriate Cure *use* Polymerize Final *use* Definitive Freeway space *use* Interocclusal distance Full denture *use* Complete denture Lower (teeth, arch) *use* Mandibular Model *use* Cast Modeling compound *use* Modeling plastic impression compound Muscle trimming *use* Border molding Overbite, overjet *use* Vertical overlap, horizontal overlap Periphery *use* Border Post dam, postpalatal seal *use* Posterior palatal seal Prematurity *use* Interceptive occlusal contact Saddle *use* Denture base Study model *use* Diagnostic cast Take impressions, photographs, radiographs *use* MakeUpper (teeth, arch) *use* Maxillary X-ray, roentgenogram *use* Radiograph

In addition, specimen should be used rather than sample when referring to an example regarded as typical of its class.

Additional Terminology Guidelines

**Acrylic**
An adjective form that requires a noun, as in acrylic resin.

**Affect, effect**
Affect is a verb; effect is a noun.

**African American**
Spelled thus and preferred over Negro and black in both adjective (African American patients) and noun (... of whom 20% were African Americans) forms.

**Average, mean, median**
Mean and average are synonyms. Median refers to the midpoint in a range of items; the midpoint has many items above as below it.

**Basic**
Like fundamental, this word is often unnecessary. An example of unnecessary use: Dental implants consist of two basic types: subperiosteal and endosteal.

**Between, among**
Use between when 2 things are involved and among when there are more than 2.

**Biopsy**
This noun should NOT be used as a verb. A biopsy was performed on the Tissue, rather than: The tissue was biopsied.

**Centric**
An adjective that requires a noun, as in centric relation.

**Currently, now, at present, etc.**
These expressions are often unnecessary, as in: This technique is currently being used...

**Data**
Use as a plural, as in: The data were...

**Employ**
Should not become an elegant variation of use, as in This method is employed ...

**Ensure**
Preferred over insure in the sense of to make certain.

**Fewer, less**
Use fewer with nouns that can be counted (fewer patients were seen) and less with nouns that cannot be counted (less material was used).

**Following**
After is preferred.

**Imply, infer**
The speaker implies; the listener infers.

**Incidence**
The rate at which a disease occurs in a given time; sometimes confused with prevalence (the total number of cases of a disease in a given region).

**Majority**
Means more than half; use most when you mean almost all. **Male, female**
For adult humans, use men and women. For children, use boys and girls.

**Must, should**
Must means that the course of action is essential. Should is less strong and means that the course of action is recommended.

**Numbers**
Spell out numbers used in titles or headings and numbers at the beginning of a sentence. The spelled version may also be preferable in a series of consecutive numbers that may confuse the reader (eg, 2 3.5-inch disks should be written two 3.5-inch disks). In all other cases, use Arabic numerals.

**Orient**
Proper form; avoid orientate.

**Pathologic**
Use instead of pathological. Other words in which the suffix -al has been dropped include biologic, histologic, and physiologic.

**Pathology**
The study of disease; often mistaken for pathosis (the condition of disease)

**Percent**
Use the percent sign in the text, as in The distribution of scores was as follows: adequate, 8%; oversized, 23%; and undersized, 69%. But spell out when the percent opens a sentence, as in Twenty percent of the castings ...

**Prior to**
Before is preferred.

**Rare, infrequent, often not, etc.**
Whenever possible, these vague terms should be backed up with a specific number.

**Rather**
Like very, this word should be avoided.

**Regimen**
A planned program for taking medication, dieting, exercising, etc. Not to be confused with regime, meaning a system of government or management.

**Sex**
Use “sex” rather than “gender” unless you are referring to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

**Symptomatology**
The science or study of symptoms; this word is not a synonym for the word symptoms.
Technique
Preferred over technic.

Using
Avoid the dangling modifier in sentences such as “The impression was made using vinyl polysiloxane impression material.” Write “with” or “by using” instead.

Utilize
Use is preferred.

Vertical
An adjective that needs a noun, as in vertical relation.

Via
Use through, with, or by means of.

White
Preferred over Caucasian. This is true only if the patient is from the Caucasus region of Eastern Europe. If not, use the term, white to describe the patient.

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