REPLACING VERY AND THING

PURPOSE OF DLA

Some writers add the word very in order to increase the impact of a word. However, instead of using two words to convey an idea, it is better to use one precise word. Mark Twain gave this advice to writers: “Substitute ‘damn’ every time you’re inclined to write ‘very’; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be.”

Another word that is popular with some writers is thing. This word’s main problem is that it has no actual meaning. There is always a specific word for what you are trying to convey. Find it.

STEP 1: For each of the pairs below, keep the idea but replace both words with one precise word. Do not just cross out the word very.

Correct: very large → enormous  Incorrect: very large

1. very small
2. very angry
3. very loud
4. very good
5. very quiet
6. very pretty
7. very confused
8. very bad

STEP 2: In the sentences below, cross out the word thing(s), and write above it a precise word, making sure not to change the meaning of the sentence.

1. This thing will not work to fix the company’s financial trouble.
2. Smoking causes many negative things.
3. Of all the things I got for my birthday, the novel The Hunger Games is my favorite.
4. One thing I find the most beneficial at Riverside City College is the Writing and Reading Center.
5. While we discussed several things in the meeting, we did not find a solution to our dilemma.

STEP 3: Take your completed activity to a WRC instructor on duty, go over your answers, and make whatever changes are necessary. Ask the instructor to fill in the section below.