REPLACING VERY AND THING

PURPOSE: 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.” This DLA should take approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete.

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

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 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. My new smartphone has many unique 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.

__________________________________________________________________________
instructor’s name

__________________________________________________________________________
instructor’s signature

__________________________________________________________________________
date