



# Plain Words (Part 2)

By Joseph Kimble

Last month I offered, with some qualifications, a list of inflated words. This month I offer two lists of wordy phrases and a list of lawyerisms.

The first two lists overlap: the second one includes many compound prepositions (also called complex or phrasal prepositions)—that is, prepositions consisting of more than one word. In the second list, which groups phrases with similar meanings, I checkmarked the groups of compound prepositions. Exactly 75 years ago, writing about compound prepositions in his classic *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, Fowler said that, while some are worse than others, “taken as whole, they are among the worst element in modern English, stuffing up what is written with a compost of nouny abstractions.”

The cure is at hand. You should rarely have to use any of the wordy phrases in these first two lists.

Compound Prepositions	Shorter, Simpler
as a means of	to
as to	on, for, about, of
by means of	by, with
by reason of	because of
by virtue of	by, under, because of
during the period from	from
for a period of	for
from the point of view of	from, for
in addition to	besides
in back of	behind
in connection with	with, about, concerning, for
in excess of	more than, over
in favor of	for
in lieu of	instead of, rather than
[be] in receipt of	have
in terms of	in, for, about
in the absence of	without
in the amount of	for
in the case of	in, with (or cut it)
in the nature of	like
in the neighborhood of	about, roughly
on behalf of	for
on the basis of	by, from, because of
on the occasion of	on
on the part of	by

**Compound Prepositions** under the provisions of with the exception of

**Other Wordy Phrases**  
 ✓as regards in reference to in regard to in relation to with reference to with regard to with respect to concerning the matter of in the event that in a situation where under circumstances in which due to the fact that because of the fact that in view of the fact that for the reason that inasmuch as despite the fact that notwithstanding the fact that

✓as a consequence of as a result of ✓prior to previous to antecedent to anterior to ✓subsequent to posterior to during such time as during the time that ✓in the course of during the course of

**Shorter, Simpler** under except for

**Shorter, Simpler** about, concerning, on, for

if, when because, since, given that

although, even though

because of, from before after while during

**Other Wordy Phrases** at present at the present time at this point in time

at an early date in the near future at the time that at such time as at the place where in the place in which until such time as

✓in proximity to in the vicinity of there is a need for it is [necessary, important] that

has discretion to is permitted to is authorized to is able to is in a position to has the ability to

✓for the purpose of in order to with a view to with the object of

there is no doubt but that this is a [topic, subject] that the question as to whether it would appear that

it is probable that in a [negligent, precise] manner

on a daily basis a large [number, percentage] of the majority of

sufficient number of adequate number of excessive number of have a negative impact

no later than June 30 on or before June 30

**Shorter, Simpler** now, currently

soon when where

until close to, near

must, should

may

can

to, for

doubtless, no doubt

this topic whether, the question whether

apparently probably

negligently, precisely

daily, every day

many most

enough

too many

hurt, harm

before July 1

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We come finally to the lawyerisms—words that give legal writing its musty smell. They should be completely avoided. Total abstinence. Either cut the word entirely or find a plain, modern-day equivalent.

This is not a complete list, but it includes many of the most common offenders.

ab initio	said (for <i>the, that,</i>
above-mentioned	or <i>those</i> )
ad idem	same (for <i>it</i> or <i>them</i> )
aforementioned	ss.
aforesaid	sub judice
anent	such (for <i>the,</i>
arguendo	<i>that,</i> etc.)
before-mentioned	thenceforth
below-mentioned	thereafter
case at bar	thereat
ex contractu	therefor
ex delicto	therein
foregoing	thereof
henceforth	thereunto
hereafter	therewith
hereby	to wit
herein	unto
hereinafter	vel non
hereinbefore	viz.
hereof	whatsoever
heretofore	whenever
hereunto	whereat
herewith	wherefore
instant case,	wherein
matter, etc.	whereof
instanter	wheresoever
inter alia	whosoever
inter se	within-named
premises (in the sense	witnesseth
of “matters already	(and other verbs
referred to”)	ending in <i>-eth</i> )

Go forth and simplify. ◆



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