

Tightening and Cutting

I. Phatic phrases are naturalistic but boring to read.

1. Gray said, "So what did you think of school so far?"

"It's okay."

"I heard you're in English class with Maritza and Maria and them. I figured Athena would try to grab you. I used to be in her little club, but she got to be a pain."

2. Gray said, "So what did you think of school so far? I heard you're in English class with Maritza and Maria and them. I figured Athena would try to grab you. I used to be in her little club, but she got to be a pain."

II. Too much information for Twentieth-first Century Readers

1. *The trees in the gorge had begun to turn rusty orange, having passed their brightest colors earlier up there in the mountains than in town, but in the late afternoon light, they were still pretty spectacular. Three hawks were circling at about eye level. Merlee filled up her lungs before going inside.*

2. The trees in the gorge were rusty orange in the late afternoon light. Three hawks circled at eye level. Merlee filled up her lungs and went inside.

III. Over-writing, on the other hand, is a good way to get material you can then select from:

1. Aside from the spice and the wafting scent of cooked meat, the kitchen was entirely orderly. The potato and carrot cuttings were neatly disposed in the black plastic garbage bin which was nestled under the sink. To the left of the sink was the stove, an old but hearty gas Frigidaire oven that she has insisted on before her husband Marty passed away, God bless his soul. To the right of the sink was the bread box, which she cleaned incessantly, and the black 16-cup coffee maker. The kitchen walls where a dark maroon color bereft of decoration except for a realistically painted Jesus on a cross.

2. Aside from the spice and the wafting scent of cooked meat, the kitchen was entirely orderly. The potato and carrot cuttings were neatly disposed in the black plastic garbage bin which was nestled under the sink. The kitchen walls where a dark maroon color bereft of decoration except for a realistically painted Jesus bleeding on a cross.

IV. Just **plain tightening**: getting rid of words we don't need.

1. His hand was already up, and he laid it on Dinah's right shoulder as he turned, put his right hand on her left shoulder, and pressed his mouth into hers. They were just the same height now, Dinah having stopped growing at exactly five feet tall.

His hand was already up, and he laid it on Dinah's right shoulder and pressed his mouth into hers. They were just the same height now, Dinah having stopped growing at exactly five feet tall.

2. She heard his car spit gravel and roar out.
She heard his car leave.

3. He lay there in the silence in the grayness and knew she was dead long before he put his long feet in his slippers.

He lay there in the silence in the grayness and knew she was dead long before he put his feet in his slippers.