

Bad Style Habits: Utilize & Purpose of

Abstract

In "Bad Style Habits: Utilize & Purpose of," I point out two of my least favorite style habits. In "August *JOE*," I highlight the three Commentaries, including the fourth Commentary *JOE* is publishing this year to commemorate the Smith-Lever Act Centennial, two articles on citizen science, and three on Google.

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Utilize

This is an all-too-common habit, a bad one. Authors seem to think that "utilize" is more proper than "use," maybe because it's supposed to be more scholarly or something. It isn't. For one thing, "utilize" is kind of an ugly word. For another, it takes three syllables to communicate what "use" does in one.

Now there *is* a difference between the two words that can best be illustrated by these two sentences. "I used my knife to cut my steak." "I utilized my knife to eat my peas." Get it? "Utilize" is reserved for those instances when you are using something for a totally unintended purpose.

Otherwise, it's just pretentious and unnecessary.

Nine times out of 10—no, 99 times out of a hundred—"use" is the word you should, well, use. It makes your article more readable, and that's what you should want.

Purpose of

Another common but unfortunate habit is to write, "the purpose of this article is to describe" (whatever). Why not, "this article describes"? It's more direct. It says in three words what the former takes eight words to say. It's, again, more readable.

Just because the heading of a section of your article is "Purpose" doesn't mean you have to trot out the stiff and wordy "the purpose of this article is to." If your article is sound and well written, you do not have to spell out your intention for it. That will be clear.

Bite the bullet, and come right out with what your article does, for gosh sakes.

August *JOE*

The fourth Commentary *JOE* of the year to commemorate the Smith-Lever Act Centennial is "4-H Youth Development: The Past, the Present, and the Future"

<<http://www.joe.org/joe/2014august/comm1.php>>. In addition, there's another Commentary on 4-H, "Moving Beyond the Program: Incorporating Healthy Living Behaviors Throughout 4-H"

<<http://www.joe.org/joe/2014august/comm2.php>>, and one on "The Role of Evaluation in Determining the Public Value of Extension" <<http://www.joe.org/joe/2014august/comm3.php>>.

There are a number of other articles discussing 4-H issues, including the first two Features, and FCS is also well represented.

Two articles deal with citizen scientists and citizen science: "Using Citizen Scientists to Evaluate Light Traps for Catching Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs in Homes in Virginia"

<<http://www.joe.org/joe/2014august/rb5.php>> and "Citizen Science as a REAL Environment for Authentic Scientific Inquiry" <<http://www.joe.org/joe/2014august/iw3.php>>.

And we've got Google, too: "Enhancing Volunteer Effectiveness with Google Apps"

<<http://www.joe.org/joe/2014august/iw1.php>>, "Google Search Mastery Operators"

<<http://www.joe.org/joe/2014august/tt1.php>>, and "Google Earth: Low-Investment GIS for Extension Professionals" <<http://www.joe.org/joe/2014august/tt2.php>>.

That leaves 26 other articles to discover and enjoy.

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