



This series was written by Writing Tip Wednesday reader **Rick Hull**. Rick has been a health communications specialist with the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's (NCCDPHP's) Office of the Director for 36 years, many of them as a writer-editor. He is NCCDPHP's clearance coordinator and branding ambassador, CDC's logo-licensing and co-branding coordinator, and a reviewer in CDC's system logos clearance.

His favorite quotation is "Great ideas are hogwash. Style and structure are the essence of great writing." —Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature*

Deadly Sin #3: Big-Deal Words

Almost every writing guide will advise you to choose shorter words over longer ones. Why? Big words are harder to read, they tend to sound abstract rather than precise, and they sound show-offish. Granted, sometimes a big word is the only word, or it best captures the nuance you want. But I don't think you'll find too many nuances in the following list of common big-deal words.

Instead of this	Say this
ascertain	find out
impact	effect
facilitate	help
initiate	begin
termination	end
utilize	use

[Use Simple Words and Phrases](https://www.plainlanguage.gov) from Plainlanguage.gov is a great resource for learning how to avoid big-deal words. Bookmark it!