



3Cs MEDICAL WRITING

E D I T 3

Avoid Using Empty Words

*The third of twelve edits for clear,
concise, coherent English.*

SEAMAN MEDICAL, INC.

Why it matters

Readers spend time on every word — even the empty ones.

- 1 Empty words add length, not meaning.
- 2 They bury the real point.
- 3 Non-native readers tire faster.

Cut what's empty

MEANING

~~EMPTY~~

Keep one. Cut the other.

*...empty words add length
without adding meaning.*

Empty words add ambiguity.
Occasionally that ambiguity is useful.
But usually we don't want it.

Empty words in front

EMPTY WORDS DELAY THE POINT

"It has been suggested
that diabetes can lead
to chronic kidney
disease."

What's the actual point?

Keep reading...

Five empty words push
the actual meaning
to the end of the sentence.

See the empty words

*The empty words (amber)
add no meaning.*

It has been suggested that
diabetes can lead to
chronic kidney disease.



EMPTY WORDS

Empty: 5 words.

Almost half the sentence.

Cut the empty words

Same meaning.

Fewer words.

Diabetes can lead to
chronic kidney disease.

Empty: 0 words.

Reader understands immediately.

K E Y P O I N T

Make every
word count.

*Cut the empty words.
Keep what carries meaning.*

