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Ms. Particular Presents: *Fact*

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Today we'll look at "fact," which is another one of those four-letter words that get you into trouble with Ms. Particular.

A “fact” is immutable and undisputed

Do not use “fact” when you mean

observation

phenomenon

finding

result

effect

value

**or anything else that is subject to interpretation
and dispute**

“The fact that” should be edited out of every sentence in which it occurs¹

Replace every “fact that” with

“owing to the fact that” → *because*

“in spite of the fact that” → *although or despite*

“unaware of the fact that” → *clueless*²

“Due to the fact that” is an egregious abuse of readers’ sensibilities—*Ms. P.*

¹ William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. (New York, Longman, 2000).

² Colloquial, uncollegial, and to be avoided in scientific writing (you never know who’s going to be reviewing your proposals)

Also beware of “factual”

It has two meanings in English:

- (1) of, or relating to facts**
- (2) true**

My analysis might be “factual” (i.e., based on an interpretation of “facts”) but completely wrong-headed and erroneous (untrue).