Avoid Filter Words

Yes, all writing styles advice about reducing or eliminating filter words, but Deep POV takes it up a level. Filter words are unnecessary, telling (explaining) words that weaken the writing and pull the reader out of the story. These words create a wall (filter) between the character and the reader. The reader becomes an observer rather than a participant.

Filter words tell and explain to the reader why the character acts, reacts, thinks, or feels the way they do instead of letting the reader interpret the action, thought, or emotion for themselves. Most of the time, filter words read like author/narrator intrusion rather than showing and experiencing through the character's eyes.

These filter (explaining/telling) words creep into the writing in many ways and forms.

Not all but most of the filter words fall into three categories:

Emotional Words
Sensing Words
Thinking Words

Emotional Words

Emotional words such as hate, fear, sad, happy, and many more fall under the filtering words category. These words tell/explain to the

reader the character's emotions, not show them. Getting rid of these words requires a new mindset. The easiest way to do this is to put yourself in the character's mind. How do you react when you're angry? Explain it with action. Maybe like stomping your feet, counting to ten, smacking a fist into an open palm, or screaming?

Resolving filter word issue will increase the word count but the story will be more vivid and engaging.

Six Primary Emotions:
  • Anger
  • Disgust
  • Fear
  • Happiness
  • Sadness
  • Surprise

For Deep POV, it is important to watch for facial expressions and motions.

Tips:
Avoid any facial expressions or motions the POV character cannot see, hear, feel, or do.

When writing, it is important to show the facial emotion, and the action associated. Show the reason the character experienced them.

More emotional words to look for:

appreciative	glad	nostalgic
angry	gloomy	passive
accepting	glum	reserved
blissful	grouchy	respectful
disenchanted	grumpy	sad
calm	happy	sadistic
confident	indifferent	satisfied
contented	joy	selfish
cool	jubilant	sentimental
distressed	mad	serene
earnest	merry	sour
easy	miserable	surprised
ecstatic	moody	sweet
elated	nervous	upbeat
evenhanded	neutral	vivacious

Issue: (furious)

Joe was *furious* at his neighbor.

This sentence is fine in other writing styles, but it violates Deep POV principles. The word *"furious"* is an emotional filter word that tells and shows the reader nothing.

Fix:

Joe felt the veins around his neck swell. He balled his fists, narrowed his eyes, and glared at his neighbor.

This sentence is longer but shows (not tells) Steve's anger. But this example could be better.

Steve arched his eyebrows and tightened his lips. He felt the veins around his neck swell. He balled his fists and glared at his neighbor.

Joe can do stuff. Here he arched his eyebrows and tightened his lips. Adding some facial descriptions associated with the emotion enhanced the sentence.

Issue: (terrified)

The sight of the dog *terrified* Sue.

This sentence is acceptable in other writing styles but not in Deep POV. The word *"terrified"* is an emotional filter word. This sentence shows nothing.

Fix:

The dog appeared and growled. Drool dripped from its large fangs.

Oh, God. Sue quivered.

This sentence shows (describes) to the reader why Sue is terrified. Can I improve this sentence?

The dog appeared and growled. Drool dripped from its large fangs.

> Oh, God. Sue shut her eyes tight and quivered.

Sue cannot see her eyes but she commands her eyes to do something. Adding a little facial reaction enhanced the sentence.

Sensing Words

Sensing words are also filtering words that most of the time tell or explain to the reader. Deep POV is about avoiding sensing words to describe any of the five basic human senses: Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, and Touch.

Search for these sensing words in your writing and see if you can replace them with showing.

Sight:	sighted, sighting, see, saw, seeing, seemed, look, looked, looking, noted, noted, noting, notice, noticed, noticing, watch, watched, watching
Sound:	sounded, sounding, sound like, hear, heard, hearing, listen, listened, listening, catch, caught, catching, eavesdrop, eavesdropped, eavesdropping, overhear
Smell:	smelled, smelling, detect the smell of, diagnose, get a whiff of, scent, smell like, whiff
Taste:	tasted, tasting, appreciate, appreciated, appreciating, delight in, enjoy, relish, savor, take pleasure in
Touch:	touched, touching, feel, felt, feeling, feel like, experience, experienced, experiencing, suffer, suffered, suffering

Issue: (saw)

Charlie sat deep in thought. In his mind, he *saw* Margaret's shy smile and heard her sweet voice.

This sentence is telling (saw) what is in Charlie's mind.

Fix:

Charlie smiled. Images of Margaret's shy smile played in his mind, and the memory of her sweet voice added to his euphoria.

Removing the sensing word "saw" and adding a little facial reaction enhanced the sentence.

Issue: (heard)

Charlie cranked the handle on the old Model T pickup, and he *heard* the engine rumble to life.

This sentence is telling (heard) the reader what the character is hearing.

Fix:

Charlie cranked the handle on the old Model T pickup, and the engine rumbled to life.

Removing the sensing word (heard) improved this sentence. The reader does not need to be told Charlie heard the engine start.

Issue: (felt)

She ***felt*** herself drawn to the tall, handsome soldier in the lobby.

In other writing styles, this sentence is acceptable. However, Deep POV is about avoiding filter words. Can this sentence be reworded?

Fix:

The tall, handsome soldier walked into the lobby. She couldn't keep her eyes off him.

This sentence reads more engaging.

Issue: (taste, smell)

Charlie could taste and smell the stew and bread in his mind.

Fix:

Charlie smiled. The aroma and flavor of the stew and bread registered in his mind.

Note:

Most of the time, it is acceptable to use these sensing words when describing a simile.

Thinking Words

The same as emotional and sensing words, thinking words will add distance between the reader and a character. Avoiding thinking words will take more thought. Depending on the context, some of these thinking words are acceptable in Deep POV. But if possible, avoid these words.

Note:

Search for all the word forms. Example: believe, believed, and believing

Some thinking words to look for, but there are many more:

able	gather	suspect
ascertain	know	think
assume	learn	understand
believe	realize	wish
debate	recall	wonder
decide	regard	
discover	remember	

Issue: (wished)

Cruz almost *wished* the car didn't start. He tried the ignition and the damn thing fired up on the first try.

This reads fine and is acceptable in all other writing styles, but not in Deep POV. Eliminating the thinking word **"*wished*"** will improve the scene.

Fix:

Cruz reached for the ignition. Don't start, don't start. The starter cracked, and the engine fired up on the first try, and purred like a kitten.

Removing the thinking word *"wished"* and adding some self-thought makes the sentence more engaging. In Deep POV thoughts are not italicized. More about italicizing thoughts in the [Format Deep POV](#) section.

Issue: (debated, whether)

Charlie glared at the old truck and *debated whether* to buy it or not.

Fix:

Charlie glared at the old truck. Should he buy it or not?

Removing the thinking words **"debated whether"** made a difference.
Or.

Charlie glared at the old truck. Hmm, should I buy it or not?

This version has the thought in the present tense. This creates a closer connection to the character. Note that

there are no italics. More on that in the Format Deep POV section.

Issue: (thought)

Joe *thought* about the times long ago when he played baseball. He sighed and turned away.

Fix:

In front of him, children chased a ball, laughing and stumbling. Where has the time gone? He sighed and turned away.

Issue: (decided, wondered)

Sue *decided* not to have an extra slice of pizza and wondered if her shorts would ever fit again.

Fix:

Sue pushed the extra slice of pizza away. Will her shorts ever fit again? She pushed away the pizza and sighed.

In Summary:

Do not use filter words to tell/explain emotions, senses, or thoughts. Instead, add verbiage that caused it, and when possible, add some facial description.