

## Seven Deadly Sins of Writing... from *Your Screenplay Sucks!*

Using Find (Ctrl F or Apple F) in your computer, chase down these words in any form you find them. Losing them or changing them (most of the time) will strengthen your work.

“Find” spaceisspace should find only the word you're looking for, not every “is” in your screenplay.

is	He is grinning... <b>becomes</b> ... He grins.
are	The convicts are singing opera... The convicts sing opera.
the	Nacho hightails it out of the town... Nacho hightails it out of town.
that	Ralph can't tell that she's French... Ralph can't tell she's French.
then	She laughs. She then looks at Alice... She laughs. She looks at Alice.
walk	Tika walks down the hall... Tika prisses down the hall.
sit	Sitting at the poker table, Doc deals the cards... At the poker table, Doc deals...
stand	The surgeon stands at the operating table and works... At the operating table, the surgeon works...
look	Cheryl is looking at Stephanie... Cheryl studies Stephanie. (also: glare, smile)
just	I am just totally exhausted... I am totally exhausted.
of the	Tom sits by the entrance of the mall... Tom sits by the mall entrance...
begin, start	The tape begins playing... The tape plays. He starts looking... He looks. She starts moving toward the den... She moves toward the den.
really	Betty is really pretty... Betty, hot as a two dollar pistol, struts in.
very	The kids sing a very old song... The kids sing a traditional song. (“very” generally means the following word is weak...)
turn	She turns and looks at him... She looks at him. (Don't overdirect the read.)
the phone	Bonnie hangs up the phone... Bonnie hangs up.
some	He pours some coffee... He pours coffee.
still	Kevin, still in paint covered overalls... Kevin, in paint covered overalls.
the room	He puts on a tie before leaving the room... He puts on a tie before leaving.
face	Nora has an amused expression on her face... Nora is amused.

seems, appears, looks    Tony seems upset... Tony is upset. So, *is* Tony upset, or just pretending?

her way            Carol pushes her way inside... Carol pushes inside. (“his, its way” too!)

both                They both stare slackjawed at the comet... They stare slackjawed at the comet.

realize            Jonah realizes Sam is the killer. (A script's not a novel. Stay out of their minds.)  
Search for "realiz", which snags "realize" and "realizing."

ly                  (as on the end of an adverb!) search for **ly**space    Also search for **ly.** and **ly,** as  
**ly**space will not find an adverb at the end of a sentence, etc. Grade school writers  
go wild over adverbs. You're past that now. Use them, um, sparingly.

emotion          Navin is very emotional. What emotion? Joy? Homicidal rage? Be specific.

ing                 Aloysius is driving like a rocket... Aloysius drives like a rocket.

it                  She brought it into the lab... She brought the briefcase into the lab.

down              Chuckles sits down at the bar... Chuckles sits at the bar.

of                 On the Internet at fip.fr, there are nine channels of music... On the Internet at  
fip.fr, there are nine music channels.

beat                Ma stands there for another beat... Ma stands there, feeling useless.

Search for and (most of the time) change these words and the writing will be tighter and more clear. Okay, so it's thirty one deadly sins. So sue me.