Writing Workshop #6: Questionable Qualifiers

Rule 8 from Strunk and White: **Avoid the use of qualifiers**.

> "*Rather, very, little, pretty*—these are the leeches that infest the pond of prose, sucking the blood of words. The constant use of the adjective *little* (except to indicate size) is particularly debilitating; we should all try to do a little better, we should be very watchful of this rule, for it is a rather important one and we are pretty sure to violate it now and then."

William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd ed. (Needham Heights, Massachusetts, Allyn & Bacon, 1979), p. 73.

"For science writing, substitute *fairly* and *somewhat* for Strunk and White's *pretty* and *little* or Twain's *very*; they're just as commonplace and feeble. In this exercise, remove the imprecise and wimpy qualifiers used in sentences taken from published scientific journal articles. Also, please note any other rhetorical flaws in these sentences." – Celia Elliott

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Original: An advantage of our method compared to the conventional IPA is that the set of parameters to be determined is more unique than in Eq. (2), where a subtle choice of basis functions is needed to avoid unrealistic adaptations of the potential.

One Solution: An advantage of our method compared with the conventional inverse perturbation analysis (IPA) is that the set of parameters to be determined is more distinctive than in Eq. (2), where a subtle choice of basis functions is needed to avoid unrealistic adaptations of the potential.

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Original: There is also a fair agreement between the theory and measurement for the Cmca and hcp phases.

One Solution: Theoretical predictions generally agree with measurements of the Cmca and hcp phases.

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Original: These effects can be interpreted as being due to the creation of entangled photon holes that are somewhat analogous to the holes of semiconductor theory.

One Solution: These effects may result from the creation of entangled photon "holes," which are analogous to the charge holes in semiconductor theory.

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Original: Since then, a great amount of work has been done to show the emergence of coherent vortices in the decay of an unstable axisymmetric vortex.

One Solution: Coherent vortices have been subsequently shown to emerge in the decay of an unstable axisymmetric vortex.