**CUT UNNECESSARY DETAILS**

Adapted from wordsmithereens.com

We sometimes overwrite, giving more information than necessary. But sometimes we also extend the obvious by being unnecessarily specific.

**Consider this paragraph from a first draft:**

*Charlie turned off the ignition, opened the driver’s side door, picked up the gun with his left hand, got out, and walked up the concrete sidewalk to the house. He pushed the doorbell with his finger, and waited. He pressed his right ear against the door. Hearing no one from inside the house, Charlie opened the front door.*

**When you’re self-editing, you need to look at your work critically. Ask yourself: Is all the information I included necessary? Consider the following points with the paragraph above:**

* If you’re driving, what door would you obviously open other than the “driver’s side door”?
* Does it matter which hand he uses to pick up the gun?
* Aren’t sidewalks usually made of concrete? If this one isn’t, is it necessary to the story to describe what kind of sidewalk it is? Probably not.
* What else would he push the doorbell with?
* What would you do with the rest?

**Too many unnecessary details, and you’re slowing down your prose. Here’s the edited paragraph:**

*Charlie turned off the ignition, picked up the gun, and got out of the car. He walked up the sidewalk to the house, then pushed the doorbell and waited. He pressed his ear against the door. Hearing no one, he opened the door.*

**Things to keep in mind when cutting out extra words, phrases, and sentences:**

* Don’t over explain.
* Don’t tell readers anything they already know.
* Don’t put in details that might not be important to the scene you’re trying to create.
* Don’t over describe a character’s physical qualities (let a character be known through action and tone).

**Activity:**

**Read through your story and find instances where you have included unnecessary details. Show your changes by crossing out the details on a paper copy or putting a line through the text in an electronic version. Your next draft should not include any of the details you omitted during this exercise.**