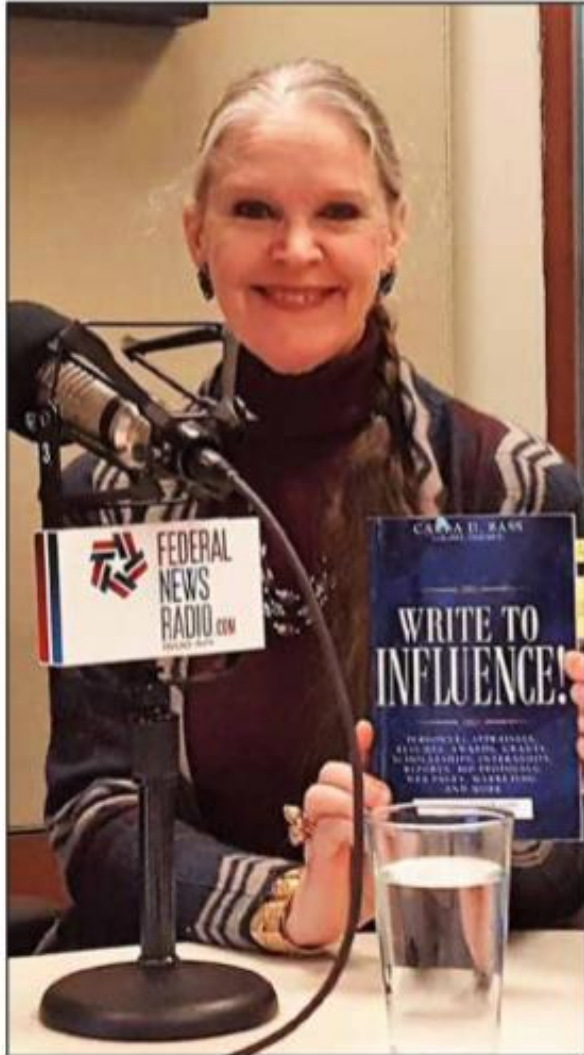


# PROGENY

## WRITE TO INFLUENCE! -- THE COLLEGE APPLICATION

(PART 2)



CARLA D. BASS,  
COLONEL, USAF (RET)  
AUTHOR, AWARD-WINNING  
BOOK, "WRITE TO INFLUENCE!"

**I**magine an inverted triangle – macro to micro. Part 1 of this two-part series spoke to strategies by which to gather data; then develop, outline, and draft that all-important essay. To recap: 1) Inventory yourself 2) Share something personal 3) Reflect –don't just report 4) Don't tackle world problems 5) Develop a roadmap 6) Compose your essay like a gourmet meal.

Part 2 addresses the pointy end of that triangle – constructing hard-hitting, focused sentences. Powerful writing is constrained by time and space ... the reader's time (measured in seconds) and space allocated to make your case. Your challenge is to make every word count and each second of the reader's time play to your advantage.

You've drafted the essay. Like the sculptor contemplating at a 6-ft tall block of marble, you must now sculpt your text, discarding words that contribute nothing to and actually detract from your message. Here are three of my 10 "Word Sculpting" tools:

1. Useless Words -- Identify and Discard. This is the most important tool and transforms text from verbose to concise and crisp. It also generates additional space in which to make your case and influence the reader. In the following examples, I identify useless words in brackets: 1) provide [with] ... this is a transitive

verb (it takes a direct object) and doesn't need [with]. I provide you a book. You provide me an opportunity – skip the [with] 2) [There is] or [There are] almost always mask the subject ... discard these and find the real subject. Test your skill—Can you reduce this to 10 words? The answer is at the article's conclusion.

The reason that I'm writing this sentence is to provide you with an exercise in which it is possible for you to identify and discard each and every word that is useless.

2. Redundancy – Once will suffice. Eschew redundancy. I highlight three types. First is double or triple tap .... There are many people who vacation at the beach to relax in the summer contains a triple subject, there are, people, and who. Revise to Many people. This also contains a double tap verb vacation and relax. Select one. We sculpt the sentence to Many people relax at the beach in the summer, trimmed from 71 to 44 spaces. The second type of redundancy is infernal. He might travel to Spain in the future. Might and future are redundant. My natural strengths are ... yep, natural and strengths. These critters are subtle, often surreptitiously sneaking into your writing. Did you find the redundancy in that last sentence? The third type is stating the obvious, Phase 1 is only the beginning of this great project or The state of Virginia has fabulous parks.

3. Verbs Are Your Friends – Rely on Them! Verbs invigorate your writing. Avoid overused, boring verbs such as assist, con-

tribute, or provide that obfuscate what really occurred. Shine the light on "hidden" verbs as these, too, waste space. For example, make a reservation equates to reserve. She needed a student card to gain entry into the building ... here, gain entry equates to enter. Finally, condense a multi-word verb into one ... ask for equates to request, take down equates to remove, replace give the ability to with enable and negatively impacts with hinder or impede. How would you replace would much rather? Prefer!

These tools are suited for students in middle school, too. With the generous cooperation of Hill School – notably Dr. Huntington Lyman, Academic Dean and Jill Beifuss, Chair of the English Department I developed and taught a prototype workshop for students in 7th and 8th grades. Inculcating these skills early and practicing them throughout high school and college, students will learn to leverage the power of their own written words, open doors to opportunity, and reap a lifetime of benefits.

Answer to the challenge— This is an exercise to identify and discard useless words.

*Carla has taught powerful writing to thousands of people for the past 15 years. Her workshops are tailored to a variety of audiences: high school students thru professionals in the workforce. "Write to Influence!" is available as paperback and e-book at Amazon and other retailers. Additional information about Carla, her book, and workshops is at [www.carladbass.com](http://www.carladbass.com)*