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Filters—What They Are, How To Avoid Them

By Jennifer Turner

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FILTERS, WHAT ARE THEY, HOW TO AVOID THEM

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Filters are the extraneous words we use when attributing a thought or action to a character. Here are a list of a few of the most common used:

He/She felt

He/She heard

He/She saw

He/She smelled

He/She tasted

and others, like:

He/She thought

He/She believed

He/She wondered

The latter three (and others like them) are really not as "bad" as the above 'sensory' list. As with any general writing 'rule' there are instances when a filter is actually needed, or works better than without it—such as there are sentences where the word "was" works better than any other word, although we're taught to avoid using the passive form of that word.

The reason filters are considered unnecessary or bad for the story, is because it keeps the writer from reaching a depth of character they might otherwise obtain. It can also jerk the reader out of the story and remind them they are reading, rather an experiencing the tale. For instance:

"She felt embarrassed by his lewd comments."

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Could be written stronger, and give the character more depth if, you show this, rather than tell it: "She recoiled and averted her face, embarrassed by his lewd comments."

In the first instance, we're being told about her embarrassment, not how she behaves when embarrassed. Now, take another character, who perhaps becomes angry when she's embarrassed and the sentence would read like this:

"She clenched her fists and scowled, enraged he would embarrass her with such lewd comments."

By fixing the reader deeply into the character, there is no need to tell them she felt, or she saw, the writer simply needs to show what that characters feels and sees. As in a character who has a

background in fashion design might look at a sunset and see:

"The glowing sun cast the landscape in vermillion and gold, a combination she could use in the fall designs."

Or another character, who is a romantic at heart, might see the same sight and think:

"The glowing sun cast the landscape in vermillion and gold, a lush and perfect backdrop for her date's handsome face.

Neither of the above would have quite the same impact if the writer used:

"She saw the glowing sun cast the landscape in vermillion and gold."

Working with you're characters, their experiences, and learning to show their thoughts rather than telling them, will enliven your work and carry the story to the next level.

Author of dozens of articles and award winning short stories, Jennifer Turner offers caring and concise critiques for aspiring authors without the high cost of big business editorial services at, ROTO—WRITER CRITIQUE SERVICE <http://jturner.00books.com/index.html>

Is Your Ezine Being Zapped?

By Michael Southon

About a year ago I wrote an article titled 'Winning The War On Sp^m'. Unfortunately, the war on sp^m is not being won at all.

In fact, the problem is now so serious that sp^am is shaping up to be the greatest threat to online marketing.

The threat comes not from sp^mmers themselves, but from the filters that are being used to block

them.

These filters are hitting hard at the very core of ecommerce – Ezine Publishing.

Anti-sp[^]m filters operate at two levels: (i) client-side programs that reside on individual computers and (ii) server-side programs that ISPs are using to block incoming sp[^]m.

The problem is that the filters are now so sensitive they are blocking even the most innocent of Newsletters.

For example, if your Newsletter contains the words 'remove', 'unsubscribe' or 'click here' it will trigger anti-sp[^]m filters in many of the programs that are now being used by ISPs.

The result?

Your Ezine is zapped, deleted – and a large percentage of your subscribers will think you have stopped publishing your Newsletter.

What can you do about it?

Here are some tips to avoid sp[^]m filters:

Post your Newsletter online and then email your subscribers to tell them that the latest issue is now available online.

In your Newsletter carefully avoid (both in the subject line and the body text) all words that are likely to trigger anti-sp[^]m filters. Use the free service listed at the end of this article – it will flag any words in your Newsletter that trigger anti-sp[^]m filters.

Instead of saying 'to unsubscribe' (which is a phrase commonly found in sp[^]m), say 'If you no longer wish to receive...' or 'If you wish to leave this mailing list...' or 'To take yourself off this list...'

If there are trigger words that you simply cannot avoid, you can disguise them using carets (^) or other symbols. The 'F' word would become fr[^]e and the 'U' word would become uns[^]bscribe.

Include the word 'Newsletter' in the subject line of your email – this will help the filters identify your email as non-sp[^]m.

Avoid whole words in upper case. In many Newsletters the headers are capitalized – this will trigger the filters.

If your Newsletter contains ads, scrutinize them carefully – ezine ads, by definition, contain words frequently used by sp[^]mmers.

Here is a fr[^]e service that will help you avoid sp[^]m filters. Before you mail out your Newsletter, just

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send a copy of it to the email address below with TEST in the subject line:

Within a few seconds you'll receive a report that analyses your Newsletter and gives you a score (0 to 5=no problems 12–16=over the limit for most ISPs).

If you write articles, it's worth submitting them to this test as well, together with your Resource Box (I just sent this article to Sp^mCheck and got a score of 4.6).

Sp^mCheck is operated by Sp^mAssassin, a filter that is widely used by ISPs – so this is a good test of whether your Newsletter will get through to your subscribers.

© 2002 by Michael Southon

Michael Southon has been writing for the Internet for over 3 years. He has shown hundreds of webmasters how to use this simple technique to get massive free publicity and dramatically increase traffic and sales. To find out more, please visit:

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