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

**is**  He is grinning... **becomes**  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 to be?

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 *lyspace*   Also search for *ly* and *ly*, as *lyspace* 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.


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.

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

www.yourscreenplaysucks.com