

Nail your writing without the hammer: Choosing words with Word tools

by [Joannie Stangeland](#)
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Repeating words or phrases can add emphasis, but repetition can also start to sound like a hammer. It can be a distraction to readers.

I like to avoid using the same words too many times--and here's how Word helps me avoid a verbal pounding:

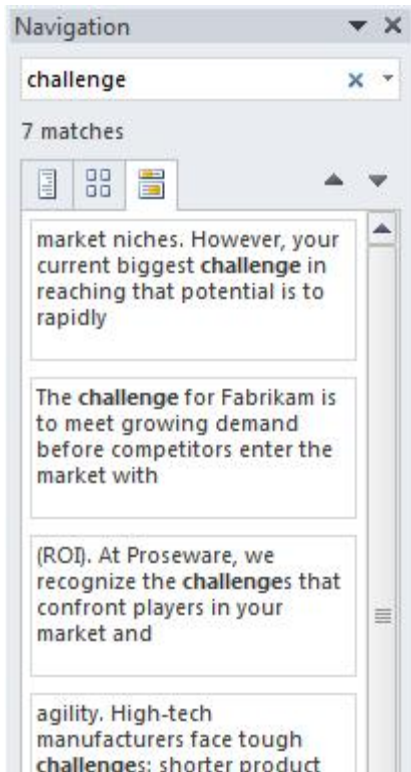
- the Thesaurus
- the Navigation Pane

(Really, it's the search results view in the Navigation Pane.)

I click the **Home** tab and click **Find**.



Then I type in the word or phrase that I'm worried about repeating, and Word gives me a list of all instances.

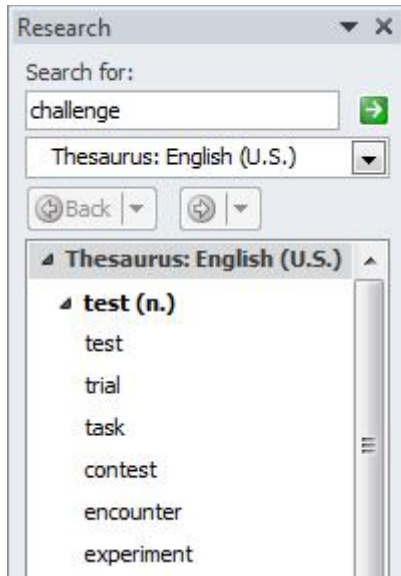


I can click each instance to go there, so I get an idea of where each mention appears in the document. (Are five mentions in one paragraph? Or are two mentions five pages apart?)

If it looks like I'm using the same word too many times or the mentions are too close together, I click the **Review** tab and click **Thesaurus**. (It looks like a little book.)



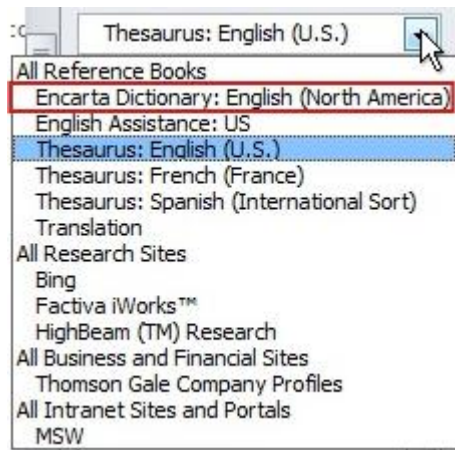
Now I type in the word and see what synonyms are returned.



Which one has the right meaning, the right nuance?

If nothing sounds close enough, I type the best of those results into the Thesaurus and try again.

When I finally find the word I think will fit, I double-check it in the dictionary to make sure I haven't wandered off of my original meaning.



This process has helped me a lot, especially in long documents. I hope it works for you, too.

-- Joannie Stangeland