

# Using Concise Language

"IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO  
CUT A WORD OUT,  
ALWAYS CUT IT OUT."



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- ✓ Concise writing is clear and effective. Conciseness requires writers to use the fewest words possible to clearly express an idea, and keeping academic writing concise is an important skill.
- ✓ Writing is more efficient when it avoids wordiness, repetitiveness, and excessive language.
- ✓ Writers can mistake adding extra words as adding strength to the writing, but, in fact, it can lead to reader confusion or annoyance. Some writers have learned to pad their writing with empty phrases or redundancies to add to the word count. The writing then becomes cluttered.
- ✓ Using exact language creates the conciseness needed to convey the ideas clearly and effectively. A sentence is not "wordy" just because it is long. A sentence can be long and concise. Neither is a paragraph or an essay necessarily wordy simply because it is long.
- ✓ "Wordiness" is the use of unnecessary words to express ideas that can be expressed with fewer words. Writing concisely, therefore, is about using the least amount of words possible to express the most accurate meaning.

## Tips to Achieve Conciseness

- 1) **Eliminate wordiness:** Using more words than you need will complicate your sentences and hide your points. Look for filler phrases in your writing and remove them. Identify wordiness patterns typical of your writing, and work to remove them from your vocabulary. Often wordy phrases can be better expressed in one or two words.
- 2) **Avoid expletive constructions (There is/are, It is/are):** When you use "there is/are" or "it is/are" to begin sentences, you create weak and wordy announcements, and usually they are avoidable. These phrases force the subject into an awkward positioning, and they are filler material. Learning to edit them from your writing will create more concise language and clear subjects and verbs in your ideas.
- 3) **Remove "I think/I believe":** Using sentences beginning with these phrases lacks concision because they can typically be omitted from your writing. You are the author, and as such, the fact that you wrote the ideas indicates that you think or believe them, making the "I think" or "I believe" unnecessary.
- 4) **Avoid repetition:** You will confuse or lose your reader's interest when you double up on descriptions or phrases that repeat the idea multiple times. Repetition, also known as redundancy, can work at times when used with purpose; however, when used without care, it makes your writing ineffective and less interesting.
- 5) **Watch out for important-sounding, but empty, phrases:** Often, important-sounding phrases that add nothing to the meaning of a sentence enter into writing habits. Take care to proofread carefully and edit

these phrases from your writing. They will weaken the strength of your ideas because they have nothing to offer.

- 6) **Remove unnecessary intensifiers:** Using words, such as *really, very, quite, extremely, severely*, etc. when they are not necessary weakens sentences. Decide if the word is enhancing meaning or just adding to wordiness. Using them is acceptable, but do so sparingly and with purpose.

## Academic Examples

- 1) **Wordy:** Many people prefer to subscribe to alternative sources for entertainment **due to the fact that** cable television is costly and nearly unnecessary.

**Concise:** Many people prefer to subscribe to alternative sources for entertainment **because** cable television is costly and nearly unnecessary.

**Wordy:** **A number of** children prefer to learn through active means rather than sitting still and listening.

**Concise:** **Many** children prefer to learn through active means rather than sitting still and listening.

**Wordy:** She will now discuss the new procedures **concerning the matter of** ordering supplies.

**Concise:** She will now discuss the new procedures **about** ordering supplies.

### Other common wordy phrases with revisions include the following:

I came to the realization that.....I realized that

She is of the opinion that.....She thinks that

Concerning the matter of.....About

During the course of.....During

In the event that.....If

In the process of.....During, while

At that point in time.....Then

With the exception of.....Except

Regardless of the fact that.....Although

For the simple reason that.....Because

It is often the case that.....Often

- 2) **Expletive use:** **There are** many ways students can achieve success in college.

**Concise:** Students can achieve success in college in many ways.

**Expletive use:** **It is** clear that you do not respect the rules of the classroom.

**Concise:** You do not respect the rules of the classroom.

- 3) **Unnecessary announcement:** I believe we should have made a left turn two miles ago.

**Concise:** We should have made a left turn two miles ago.

**Unnecessary announcement:** I think you would make a strong candidate.

**Concise:** You would make a strong candidate.

- 4) **Repetitive:** Each and every child has to bring lunch.

**Concise:** Every child has to bring lunch.

**Repetitive:** Do not refer back to your notes during the exam.

**Concise:** Do not refer to your notes during the exam.

5) **Empty phrase:** **In my opinion,** more people should take action against pollution.

**Concise:** More people should take action against pollution.

**Empty phrase:** **What I mean to say is that** all people must participate in the conservation of our planet.

**Concise:** All people must participate in the conservation of our planet.

6) **Unnecessary intensifier:** We are really very late to the party.

**Concise:** We are very late to the party.

Top 50 Redundant Words and Phrases to Avoid in Your Writing	
A total of	I personally
Absolutely certain	It should be understood
Actually	Last but not least
All things being equal	Like/Likely
Appears to be	Literally
As a matter of fact	Needless to say
As far as I am concerned	No doubt
As opposed to	Nonetheless
At the end of the day	Obviously
At this moment in time	Of course
Basically	Quite
Current/Currently	Really
Each and every one	Really quite
Everything else being equal	Seems to be
Extremely	Somewhat
Greatly	That
Fairly unique	The fact of the matter is
I am of the opinion that	To all intents and purposes
I would like to say	To my mind
I would like to take this opportunity to	Truly
In due course	Until such time as
In fact	Very/Very much so
In the end	Well/Well actually
In total	With due respect
In view of the fact that	With regards to

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