

Even when writing is grammatically correct, it can be difficult to read because of wordiness. Concise writing helps readers get to the point faster and understand the main idea better. Such clarity in writing usually develops after extensive reviewing and rewriting of text.

## WRITING CONCISE SENTENCES

To write clear and concise sentences, avoid nonessential phrases and clauses. The following tips and examples show how to do this.

### LIMIT MODIFYING PHRASES

Eliminate phrases that modify the noun but do not clarify the meaning of the sentence.

WORDY: My sister, **who can't swim**, has a puppy.

CONCISE: My sister has a puppy.

### MINIMIZE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Avoid unnecessary prepositional phrases (preposition plus a noun).

WORDY: The assignment **on writing** is due next Friday by 5:00 p.m. **on my desk in my office**.

CONCISE: The **writing assignment** must be **on my office desk** next Friday by 5:00 p.m.

### AVOID UNNECESSARY RELATIVE CLAUSES

Relative clauses begin with *that*, *who*, and *which*. Change these clauses into single words, short phrases, or eliminate them altogether.

WORDY: The man **who ran for president** was a Democrat.

CONCISE: The **presidential candidate** was a Democrat.

### REWORD INFINITIVE PHRASES

Eliminate infinitive phrases (*to* plus a verb) by using another form of the verb.

WORDY: Horses love **to run, to play, and to eat**.

CONCISE: Horses love **running, playing, and eating**.

### MODIFY OTHER PHRASES

Change wordy phrases into single words or direct expressions.

WORDY: **At this point in time**, the ceremony will begin.

CONCISE: **Now** the ceremony will begin.

Avoid passive-voice phrases by changing them to active voice.

WORDY: **An account was opened** by Mrs. Johns last week.

CONCISE: **Mrs. Johns opened** an account last week.

## USING CONCISE WORDS

### USE PRECISE WORDS

Use one word that captures the main idea instead of multiple words that approximate it.

WORDY: The view was **pretty, nice, and interesting**.

CONCISE: The view was **breathtaking**.

## ELIMINATE EXTRA OR EMPTY WORDS

Avoid using extra or empty words to describe or introduce something. Empty phrases such as “It seems that” or “This paper will now” distract from your main point.

WORDY: **It has been said that** students who do their homework do better in school.

CONCISE: Students who do their homework do better in school.

## AVOID INFLATED WRITING

Use common and precise language whenever possible. Using overly academic language to impress readers often makes writing sound inflated.

WORDY: My **sanguineous** professor **disesteemed** my **election** of **grandiloquent** words.

CONCISE: My **wise** professor **disliked** my **inflated choice** of words.

## AVOID NOMINALIZATION

Nominalization occurs when the action of a sentence is assumed by a noun. To avoid this, choose strong action verbs.

WORDY: The function of this handout is **the improvement** of wordy writing.

CONCISE: This handout **improves** wordy writing.

## OMIT REDUNDANT WORD PAIRS

When using word pairs, look to see if both words are necessary.

WORDY: My **very favorite** class is photography.

CONCISE: My **favorite** class is photography.

The following are examples of redundant word pairs:

free gift

various differences

each individual

future plans

true facts

important essentials

terrible tragedy

end result

clearly evident

final outcome

completely finish

past memories

added bonus

sudden crisis

unexpected surprise

same identical

basic fundamentals

repeat again