

Eliminating Wordiness

FACT: Long sentences are not necessarily wordy, nor are short sentences always concise. A sentence is wordy if it can be shortened without loss of meaning.

Strategies for eliminating excess words:

1. Eliminate redundancies.

Avoid phrases like “small in size,” “yellow in color,” and “true in fact.”

E.g. Agatha was determined ~~in her mind~~ to refuse his proposal.

2. Avoid unnecessary repetition of the same word or phrase.

E.g. Our newest professor desires to help each student ~~to become a better student~~ ^{grow} academically.

3. Cut empty or inflated phrases.

Avoid introductory word groups such as, “In my opinion,” “I think that,” and “One must admit.”

E.g. ~~Because of the fact that~~ she is allergic to cats, she has never owned a cat.

E.g. ~~At the present time,~~ many people are having difficulty finding jobs.

4. Simplify sentence structure by using direct and active verbs.

Be direct and “strengthen” the verb.

Get rid of “There is” and “It is” at the beginning of sentences.

E.g. ~~There is~~ another book ~~that~~ tells the story of Thomas Jefferson and explains his attitude towards his slaves.

5. Reduce clauses to phrases, and phrases to single words, whenever possible.

E.g. For her birthday, we gave Jessie a stylish vest ~~which was made of~~ silk.

6. Avoid unnecessary emphasis, especially unnecessary adverbs.

E.g. *Tangled* was a ~~very~~ unique film. Rapunzel is ~~totally~~ not like other kidnapped princesses with really long hair.