



Concise Writing

A-State Online Writing Center

Long-winded or rambling sentences tend to overwhelm or confuse readers. They can even make the reader lose interest in the topic. On the other hand, concise writing involves using as few words as possible to communicate a clear, strong message. By paying attention to factors such as diction (word choice) and syntax (how sentences are structured), writers can communicate more effectively.

Ways to Write More Concisely

Remove Weak Adjectives

Use stronger vocabulary in place of adjectives such as “very” or “really.” This helps to cut down on unnecessary words, ensure you’re using the best word choice, and bolsters your writing overall. For instance, instead of “She was very hungry,” you can write “She was ravenous.”

Other common weak qualifiers include:

- Many
- Definitely
- Actually
- Absolutely
- Probably
- Practically
- Significantly
- Extremely
- Completely
- Totally
- Basically
- Literally
- Just

Write in Active Voice

Active voice is more direct than passive voice, so it’s better to use it more often in most academic writing assignments.

Example:

Passive: The man was seen by the cat resting on the window.

Active: The cat resting on the window saw the man.

Reduce Usage of Prepositional Phrases

Search for preposition words and phrases that don't add to the meaning of the sentence/wouldn't obstruct the sentence if they were removed.

Example: When I went over to the meadow, I picked up some flowers under a tree by the river and then placed the flowers inside of a vase at my grandmother's house.

Revised: I placed flowers in a vase at my grandmother's house that I picked from a meadow.

Cut Filler Words & Phrases

If the phrase or word doesn't add to the sentence, remove it.

Example: He went to lie down on the bed.

Revised: He lay on the bed.

Example: The fact that the cat had a sweet personality factored into why I decided to adopt her.

Revised: I adopted the cat because she had a sweet personality.

Frequently Used Filler Phrases

- In the event that
- Considering the fact that
- For all intents and purposes
- In light of the fact that
- The reason for
- In my opinion
- First and foremost
- There was
- Have got

Also, note that "thing" and "it" are vague noun descriptions. Look at the sentence again and see how you can use stronger vocabulary or simply remove them in most cases.

Example: She used things like examples to convey her message.

Revised: She used examples to convey her message.

Resources

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/conciseness-handout/>

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/conciseness/index.html

<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/what-is-concise-writing/>

<https://mybookcave.com/authorpost/17-weak-words-to-avoid-in-your-writing/>