

**APSU Writing Center**

Conciseness

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- Conciseness is writing that conveys ideas clearly and efficiently to improve reader understanding by choosing words wisely and intentionally.
- A common issue is "instant prose," which results from artificially inflating content to meet length requirements. This can lead to wordiness and redundancy, which weaken the clarity of writing.

**Strategies for Writing Concisely**

- Write exactly what you mean, no more, no less.
- Respect yourself as a writer and trust that your ideas are clear without unnecessary repetition.
- Review your first draft to identify deletable words or phrases without losing meaning.
- Read paragraphs aloud to ensure that all sentences support the topic sentence.
- Keep concrete, specific examples and eliminate extra words, empty phrases, weak qualifiers, and unnecessary "to be" verbs.

**Common Issues and How to Fix Them**

**1. Eliminating Weak Intensifiers and Qualifiers**

- Sentences are more forceful without unnecessary qualifiers:
- We found the proposal [**quite**] feasible. → We found the proposal feasible.
- That behavior is [**fairly**] unique. → That behavior is unique.

**2. Avoiding Wordiness and Redundant Phrases**

- Redundant categories (delete the general category term and keep the specific word):
  - He was in a confused state. → He was confused.
  - She was honest in character. → She was honest.

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**Common redundant pairs to avoid:**

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ◦ Past history → History            | ◦ Often times/oftentimes → Often                             |
| ◦ Basic fundamentals → Fundamentals | ◦ In a confused state → Confused                             |
| ◦ Final outcome → Outcome           | ◦ Heavy/light in weight → Heavy/light                        |
| ◦ True facts → Facts                | ◦ Period in time → Period                                    |
| ◦ Terrible tragedy → Tragedy        | ◦ Round/flat in shape → Round/flat                           |
| ◦ Future plans → Plans              | ◦ Of an uncertain condition → Uncertain                      |
| ◦ Free gift → Gift                  | ◦ In order to → To   |
| ◦ Past memories → Memories          | ◦ Nowadays → Today   |
| ◦ Various differences → Differences | ◦ In my opinion, I think that → I think that / In my opinion |
| ◦ End result → Result               | ◦ At this point in time → At this point / At this time       |
| ◦ Sudden crisis → Crisis            | ◦ Due to the fact that → Because                             |
| ◦ Each individual → Individual      |  |
| ◦ Important essentials → Essentials |  |

**3. Replacing Wordy Phrases with Precise Words**

- I went to see a person who gives expert advice. → I consulted an expert.
- I really want to be a teacher. → I want to be a teacher.

**4. Strengthening Verbs**

- Use precise, active verbs instead of vague, passive constructions:
  - She has an abhorrence to loud noises. → She abhors loud noises.
  - I had a cold for a week. → I suffered a cold for a week.
  - Odysseus traveled a great distance to make it home. → Odysseus traveled a great distance toward home.

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#### **5. Avoiding Vague and Empty Words**

- Words such as area, aspect, element, factor, feature, field, kind, situation, thing, and type may signal wordiness.
  - This was a poor idea. → This idea was poor.
  - Something is wrong with the car. → The car vibrates when I accelerate.
- Words such as nice, good, bad, interesting, and unique are too broad.
  - Last night's movie was interesting. → The movie's unexpected plot twists were captivating.

For clarity of descriptive sentences, the following words and phrases should be eliminated from use:

- |             |              |             |              |                   |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|
| • kind of   | • just       | • specific  | • particular | • especially      |
| • a lot     | • sort of    | • actually  | • definitely | • somewhat        |
| • generally | • individual | • even      | • extremely  | • what            |
| • really    | • type of    | • basically | • very       | • thing/something |

#### **6. Eliminating Expletives (Unnecessary “It” and “There” Constructions)**

- There are three students in the classroom. → Three students are in the classroom.
- It is crazy that school was cancelled. → That school was cancelled is crazy.

#### **7. Avoid Broad and General Verbiage**

- I see what you mean. → I understand your point.
- When it comes to doing things the right way, she takes the cake. → Janelle consistently uses poor judgment.

#### **8. Maintain Formality in Academic Writing**

- Avoid colloquial expressions, clichés, slang, and informal language:
  - He needs to step up and be a man. → He needs to mature and act responsibly.

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Practice Conciseness

Read each sentence below and rewrite it as your own concise sentence in the blank boxes.

**Example:** I really want to be a doctor.

**Example:** In chemistry labs, students are expected to follow precise experimental procedures so that their results are accurate and reliable.

**Example:** I just wish that I had a piece of chocolate.

**Example:** Frequently, a chapter in a book reveals to the reader the main point that the author desires to bring out during the course of the chapter.

**Example:** The scene was extremely typical.

**Example:** Computer science courses often involve learning different programming languages, which students must master in order to create functional software applications.

**Example:** Maria decided it was finally time for her to take out her papers and get started on work.

**Example:** The writing center is a place where students can go in order to receive assistance with the process of writing their essays and papers.

**Example:** I took my cat to the vet who was an animal doctor.



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### **References**

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