

How to Make Your Writing Concise

Concise writing uses the most _____ and often the _____ words. But, writers often fill sentences with _____ or _____ words that can be deleted or replaced. Like bad employees, words that don't accomplish enough should be fired. When only the most effective words remain, writing will be far more concise and readable. This handout will give you tips on how to use the most effective words, making your writing clearer.

1. **Replace _____ words with more _____, _____ words.**

Often, writers use several _____ and _____ words to express a concept, wasting energy expressing ideas that are better relayed through fewer specific words. As a general rule, more specific words lead to more concise writing. Brainstorming or searching a _____ can lead to the word best suited for a specific instance. Notice that the examples below actually convey more as they _____ in word count.

Wordy: The politician talked about several of the merits of after-school programs in his speech
(14 words)

Concise: The politician touted after-school programs in his speech.
(8 words)

Wordy: Suzie believed but could not confirm that Billy had feelings of affection for her.
(14 words)

Concise: Suzie assumed that Billy adored her.
(6 words)

Wordy: Our Web site has made available many of the things you can use for making a decision on the best dentist.
(20 words)

Concise:

Wordy: Working as a pupil under someone who develops photos was an experience that really helped me learn a lot.
(20 words)

Concise:

2. _____ **every word's** _____

Check _____ word to make sure that it is providing something _____ and _____ to a sentence. If words are dead weight, they can be _____ or _____. Other sections in this handout cover this concept more specifically, but there are some general examples below containing sentences with words that could be cut.

Wordy: Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band of musicians together in 1969, giving it the ironic name of Blind Faith because early speculation that was spreading everywhere about the band suggested that the new musical group would be good enough to rival the earlier bands that both men had been in, Cream and Traffic, which people had really liked and had been very popular.
(66 words)

Concise: Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band in 1969, ironically naming it Blind Faith because speculation suggested that the group would rival the musicians' previous popular bands, Cream and Traffic.
(32 words)

Wordy: The teacher demonstrated some of the various ways and methods for cutting words from my essay that I had written for class.
(22 words)

Concise:

Wordy: Many have made the wise observation that when a stone is in motion rolling down a hill or incline that that moving stone is not as likely to be covered all over with the kind of thick green moss that grows on stationary unmoving things and becomes a nuisance and suggests that those things haven't moved in a long time and probably won't move any time soon.
(67 words)

Concise:

3. _____ Sentences.

Some information does not require a _____, and can easily be inserted into _____ without losing any of its value. To get more strategies for sentence combining, google "Owl Purdue Strategies for Variation."

Wordy: Ludwig's castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness. By his death, he had commissioned three castles.
(18 words)

Concise: Ludwig's three castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness.
(11 words)

Wordy: The supposed crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. This crash is rumored to have occurred in 1947.
(24 words)

Concise:

4. Use the _____

When possible, use the active voice (the subject does the action).

Wordy: A meeting can be arranged by our manager.

Concise: Our manager can arrange a meeting.

Wordy: Several new people have been hired and space is going to need to be found to accommodate these people.

Concise:

Of course, sometimes using the passive voice makes sense. For example, we use the passive voice when we want to emphasize the object of a sentence or if we don't know the object.

Examples:

Next year we'll celebrate our 15th anniversary.

The company was founded in 2001.
The problem was brought to management's attention.

5. **Use a** _____
Items in a series should have the same _____ structure.

Wordy: She is professional, courteous, and she always comes to work on time. (*adjective, adjective, independent clause*)

Concise: She is professional, courteous, and punctual. (*adjective, adjective, adjective*)

Wordy: We could fill this position now, or someone could be hired next year. (*active voice + passive voice*)

Concise:

6. **Eliminate** _____/ _____ **Information**

Wordy: When will we have the necessary information to make a decision on which candidate to hire for the position?

Concise: When will we be able to decide who to hire?

Wordy: I talked to my supervisor and she informed me that she would approve my vacation request.

Concise:

Qualifiers can often be eliminated from your writing. Some common qualifiers are _____, **really**, **basically**, _____, _____, **somewhat**, **kind of**, _____, and **practically**.

Wordy: Finding a job can be really difficult for those who are somewhat inexperienced.

Concise: Finding a job can be difficult for the inexperienced.

7. **Limit** _____

The overuse of prepositional phrases is _____ and obscures your meaning. Some common prepositions are **on**, _____, **out of**, _____, _____, **from**, and **for**.

Wordy: We are looking for people with sales experience to join our team of recruiters.

Concise: We are looking for experienced salespeople to join our recruiting team.

Wordy: The profits in the first quarter were lower than expected for many companies in Europe.

Concise:

Practice Making Sentences Concise

Directions: *Make the sentences more concise.*

1. A great number of people feel that people who work for the government need to be able to communicate with the public in a more effective way.
2. In the last few weeks, some new employees have been hired by the company.
3. It is possible that we will have another meeting to talk about the matter of bonuses at the end of the year.
4. Basically, management conducted interviews with our clients and decided that we need to have more training regarding customer service.
5. Due to a request made by the client, we are not permitted to send these emails to anyone who works outside of the company.
6. It is the opinion of the team that we are capable of handling the task.
7. We are looking for people that have compassion to become volunteers each and every Thursday night.
8. We feel we should have been told by management about the new policy regarding work from home.
9. In order to answer your question, it is necessary for me to research this topic further.