CONCISION

Effective academic writing should be clear and concise, with no unnecessary words to dilute or confuse the author's meaning. Below are five ways to trim excess words from your writing.

1. Eliminate words that explain the obvious or provide excessive detail

Always consider readers while drafting and revising writing. If passages explain or describe details that would already be obvious to readers, delete or reword them.

- Wordy: *I received your inquiry that you wrote about tennis rackets yesterday, and read it thoroughly. Yes, we do have…*
- Concise: *I received your inquiry about tennis rackets yesterday. Yes, we do have…*
- Wordy: *Imagine a mental picture of someone engaged in the intellectual activity of trying to learn what the rules are for how to play the game of chess.*
- Concise: *Imagine someone trying to learn the rules of chess.*

2. Eliminate unnecessary determiners and modifiers

Writers sometimes clog up their prose with one or more extra words or phrases that seem to determine narrowly or to modify the meaning of a noun but don't actually add to the meaning of the sentence. Although such words and phrases can be meaningful in the appropriate context, they are often used as "filler" and can easily be eliminated.

- Wordy: *Any particular type of dessert is fine with me.*
- Concise: *Any dessert is fine with me.*
- Wordy: *Balancing the budget by Friday is an impossibility without some kind of extra help.*
- Concise: *Balancing the budget by Friday is impossible without extra help.*

These words and phrases can often be pruned away to make sentences clearer:

kind of	*basically*	*generally*
sort of	*for all intents and purposes*	*individual*
type of	*definitely*	*specific*
really	*actually*	*particular*

3. Omit repetitive wording

Watch for phrases or longer passages that repeat words with similar meanings. Words that don't build on the content of sentences or paragraphs are rarely necessary.

- Wordy: *The supply manager considered the correcting typewriter an unneeded luxury.*
- Concise: *The supply manager considered the correcting typewriter a luxury.*

4. Omit redundant or illogical pairs

Many pairs of words imply each other. *Finish* implies *complete*, so the phrase *completely finish* is redundant in most cases. So are many other pairs of words:

basic fundamentals	*future plans*	*terrible tragedy*
each individual _____	*important essentials*	*true facts*
end result	*past history*	*unexpected surprise*
final outcome	*past memories*	*various differences*
free gift	*sudden crisis*	*very unique*

- Wordy: *Before the travel agent was completely able to finish explaining the various differences among all of the many very unique vacation packages his travel agency was offering, the customer changed her future plans.*
- Concise: *Before the travel agent finished explaining the differences among the unique vacation packages his travel agency was offering, the customer changed her plans.*

5. Omit redundant categories

Specific words imply their general categories, so we usually don't have to state both. We know that a period is a segment of time, that pink is a color, that shiny is an appearance. In the following phrases, the general category term can be dropped, leaving just the specific descriptive word:

large in size	*round in shape*	*of an uncertain condition*
often times	*at an early time*	*in a confused state*
of a bright color	*economics field*	*unusual in nature*
heavy in weight	*of cheap quality*	*extreme in degree*
period in time	*honest in character*	*of a strange type*

- Wordy: *During that time period, many car buyers preferred cars that were pink in color and shiny in appearance.*
- Concise: *During that period, many car buyers preferred pink, shiny cars.*

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