

## Conciseness

Excess words and phrases can clog up your writing and make it less clear. Generally, there are two ways to eliminate wordiness:

- Compress what you mean into the fewest possible words.
- Don't tell your readers what they already know, don't need to know, or can infer.

Unfortunately, we can inflate our prose in so many ways that it is impossible to list them all, but the following suggestions should help you find the most common types of wordiness.

### ***Redundant Pairs***

Many pairs of words imply each other. Finish implies complete, so is redundant. So are many other pairs of words:

past memories

various differences

each individual

basic fundamentals

### ***Meaningless Modifiers***

Some modifiers are delaying tactics that we use almost unconsciously. These words and phrases can be pruned away to make sentences clearer:

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

**Example:** For all intents and purposes, American industrial productivity generally depends on certain factors that are really more psychological in kind than of any given technological aspect.

**Revision:** American industrial productivity depends on factors that are more psychological than technological.

### ***Stating the Obvious***

Often we needlessly state what everyone knows or can infer from what we are writing.

**Example:** 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.

**Revised:** Imagine someone trying to learn the rules of chess.

### ***Excessive Detail***

Sometimes we provide irrelevant details or more information than readers need to know.

**Example:** Baseball, one of our oldest and most popular outdoor summer sports in terms of total attendance at ball parks and viewing on television, has the kind of rhythm of play on the field that alternates between the players' passively waiting with no action taking place between the pitches to the batter and exploding into action when the batter hits a pitched ball to one of the players and he fields it.

**Revised:** Baseball has a rhythm that alternates between waiting and explosive action.

### ***Phrases for Words***

Another kind of redundancy results from using phrases when a well chosen word or two will substitute.

**Example:** As you carefully read what you have written to improve your wording and catch small errors of spelling, punctuation, and so on, the thing to do before you do anything else is to try to see where sequences of subjects and verbs could replace the same ideas expressed in nouns rather than verbs.

**Revised:** As you edit, first find nominalizations you can replace with clauses.

### ***Verbs Smothered in Nouns***

Try to use a verb instead of a noun phrase.

**Example:** The committee made the decision to....

**Revised:** The committee decided to....

**Example:** They entered into an agreement to....



**Example:** The evidence we have....

**Revised:** Evidence we have....

- unnecessary , and clauses

**Example:** All applicants who are interested in the job must....

**Revised:** All applicants interested in the job must....

-or-

All interested job applicants must....

- unnecessary there is and there are sentence beginnings

**Example:** There are four rules to observe....

**Revised:** Four rules to observe are....

- unnecessary passives

**Exempl**

(<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>).