

Concise Writing



Concise writing eliminates redundancy and improves clarity. To write concisely, ask yourself if certain phrases or words are necessary. If they are not, cut them. While this handout covers general concepts about concise writing, always tailor your work to your audience and assignment.

Unnecessary Relative Clauses

Wordy: The smoke that comes from factories that are situated in the valley pollutes the air.

Concise: The smoke from factories in the valley pollutes the air.

While *that comes* and *that are situated* are relative clauses (i.e., phrases starting with *that* or *which*) describing the smoke and factories, they do not clarify the sentence.

Overuse of Prepositional Phrases

Wordy: University students are required by the university to make payments of their tuition fees before the time of their registration.

Concise: University students are required to pay tuition before registering.

University, *tuition*, and *registration* are necessary to the sentence's meaning, but those nouns can be included without prepositional phrases (e.g., *of their tuition fees* or *before the time*), which unnecessarily lengthen the sentence.

Unnecessary Passive Voice

Wordy: The match had been won by the world champion shortly after it started.

Concise: The world champion won the match shortly after it started.

Writing in active voice—in this case by removing *had been* and making *the world champion* the sentence's subject—will remove unnecessary words from your writing and draw the reader's focus to the main idea of the sentence.

Extra Sentences

Wordy: The dog had spots all along its back. The dog showed its teeth and growled.

Concise: The dog had spots all along its back, and it showed its teeth and growled.

Concise: The dog with spots along its back showed its teeth and growled.

Since *the dog* is the subject of both sentences, you can combine the sentences by using *and* or by using one sentence to modify the other. Combine sentences to eliminate redundancy.

Lengthy Modifiers

Wordy: The accident occurred due to the fact that there was nothing to prevent it.

Concise: The accident occurred because there was nothing to prevent it.

Due to the fact that is an unnecessarily long modifier or descriptive phrase) that can be easily replaced with the word *because*.

Ineffective Repetition

Wordy: Before leaving on our trip, our family stopped at the store for some basic essentials, including a bag of apples. The apples our family bought for our trip were all small in size and tart in taste, though, so our family ended up not eating many of them on our trip.

Concise: Before leaving on our trip, our family stopped at the store for some essentials, including a bag of apples. They were so small and tart that we ultimately did not eat many of them.

The first sentence states that the apples were bought for the trip, so you don't need to restate *apples* or mention their size and taste in prepositional phrases. *Our family* was replaced by *we* because the pronoun *we* clearly refers to *our family* in this example, reducing the repetition of *our family*.

Unnecessary Nouns

Wordy: The nature of the crisis situation was such that it called for our immediate attention.

Concise: The crisis called for our immediate attention.

Neither *nature* nor *situation* adds any additional meaning to the sentence.

Redundant Introductory Words

Wordy: Upon reflection, I remembered eating bread and cheese at the reception.

Concise: I remembered eating bread and cheese at the reception.

Upon reflection and *I remember* effectively have the same meaning.

Consider these commonly used phrases and their more concise counterparts as you revise your writing to be more concise.

Avoid using	Replace with
the reason is because	because
due to the fact that	because
despite the fact that	even though
in spite of the fact that	even though
regardless of the fact that	even though
it is important that	should
is able to	can
has the opportunity to	can
in order to	to
for all intents and purposes	for all purposes