

Eliminating Wordiness

Good academic writing is clear and concise. These twelve strategies can help you reduce wordiness in your own writing.

Avoid using a phrase when a word will do

at this point in time = now

has the ability to = can

in this day and age = today

is aware of the fact that = knows

due to the fact that = because

the majority of = most

on a daily basis = daily

each and every one = all

in close proximity to = near

Eliminate redundant words

the reason [why]

the [final] conclusion

[utmost] perfection

enter [into]

[the month of] August

totally] oblivious

[the colour] green

[past] experience

mix [together]

correct [amount of] change

[viable] alternative prospects

Avoid needless repetition

In trauma victims, breathing is restored by **artificial respiration**. Techniques of **artificial respiration** include mouth-to-mouth **respiration** and mouth-to-nose **respiration**.



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In trauma victims, breathing is restored by artificial respiration, either mouth-to-mouth or mouth-to-nose.

Drop most “there is” and “there are” sentence openers

Dropping these openers places key words at the end of the sentence where they are best emphasized:

✗ There are serious consequences in failing to yield right of way.

✓ Failing to yield right of way can have serious consequences.

Avoid some “it” sentence openers

✗ It gives me great pleasure to introduce our speaker.

✓ I am pleased to introduce our speaker.

Delete needless “to be” constructions

Forms of the verb “to be” (is, was, are, etc.) often add clutter without adding meaning: I find some of his stories [to be] amusing.

Avoid weak, wordy verbs

is in conflict with = conflicts

make an assumption = assume

come to a conclusion = conclude

take action = act

make a decision = decide

come to the realization = realize

Eliminate needless prepositions

✗ Some members of the committee made these recommendations.

✓ Some committee members made these recommendations.

✗ A man by the name of Godot is waiting for you.

✓ A man named Godot is waiting for you.

Use “that” and “which” sparingly

This [is a] writing problem [that] is easy to correct.

The book [, which is] about Hemingway [,] is fascinating.

Fight noun addiction

Nouns manufactured from verbs (nominalizations) make your sentences weak and wordy. Weak verbs and needless prepositions often accompany nominalizations:

✗ Give consideration to the possibility of changing jobs.

✓ Consider changing jobs.

Keep the subject clear

Nominalizations can make a sentence vague by hiding the agent of the action, i.e., the subject performing the verb. For example:

✗ A need for immediate action exists.

✓ We must act immediately.

Make negatives positive

did not succeed = failed

does not have = lacks

did not prevent = allowed