**Concise Writing**

The goal of concise writing is to use the **most effective words**.

Concise writing does not always have the fewest words, but it always uses the strongest ones. Writers often fill sentences with weak or unnecessary words that can be deleted or replaced. Words and phrases should be deliberately chosen for the work they are doing.

Generally, more specific words = more concise writing.

Try using a thesaurus to find a stronger word.

**1. Replace several vague words with more powerful and specific 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**: Our website *presents criteria for determining* the best dentist. (9 words)

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

**Concise**: Working as a *photo technician's apprentice* was an *educational* experience. (10 words)

**2. Interrogate every word in a sentence**

Check every word to make sure that it is providing something important and

unique to a sentence.

**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**: The teacher demonstrated methods for cutting words from my essay. (10 words)

**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)

**3. Combine Sentences**

Some information does not require a full sentence, and can easily be inserted into another sentence without losing any of its value.

**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:** The supposed *1947* crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. (16 words)

**4. Eliminate Words**

Eliminate words that explain the obvious or provide excessive detail.

**Wordy:** I received your inquiry that you wrote about tennis rackets yesterday, and read it thoroughly. Yes, we do have. . . (19 words)

**Concise:** I received your inquiry about tennis rackets yesterday. Yes, we do have. . . (12 words)

**Wordy:** It goes without saying that we are acquainted with your policy on filing tax returns, and we have every intention of complying with the regulations that you have mentioned. (29 words)

**Concise:** We intend to comply with the tax-return regulations that you have mentioned. (12 words)

**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. (27 words)

**Concise:** Imagine someone trying to learn the rules of chess. (9 words)

**Wordy:** Any particular type of dessert is fine with me. (9 words)

**Concise:** Any dessert is fine with me. (6 words)

**Here's a list of some words and phrases that can often be pruned away to make sentences clearer:**

kind of

type of

really

for all intents and purposes

generally

**5. Omit repetitive wording**

Watch for phrases or longer passages that repeat words with similar meanings.

**Wordy:** The supply manager considered the correcting typewriter an unneeded luxury. (10 words)

**Concise:** The supply manager considered the correcting typewriter a luxury. (9 words)

**Wordy:** Our branch office currently employs five tellers. These tellers do an excellent job Monday through Thursday but cannot keep up with the rush on Friday and Saturday. (27 words)

**Concise:** Our branch office currently employs five tellers, who do an excellent job Monday through Thursday but cannot keep up with Friday and Saturday rush periods. (25 words)

**6. Omit redundant pairs/phrases**

Many pairs of words imply each other. For example, “finish” implies complete, so the phrase “completely finish” is redundant in most cases.

**So are many other pairs of words:**

past memories

true facts

important essentials

end result

free gift

past history

unexpected surprise

**Wordy:** During that time period, many car buyers preferred cars that were *pink in color* and shiny in appearance. (18 words)

**Concise:** During that period, many car buyers preferred *pink*, shiny cars. (10 words)

**Wordy:** The microscope revealed a group of organisms that were round in shape and peculiar in nature. (16 words)

**Concise:** The microscope revealed a group of peculiar, round organisms. (9 words)

**7. Change Phrases**

Convert phrases into single words when possible.

**Wordy:** The employee with ambition... (4 words)

**Concise:** The ambitious employee... (3 words)

**Wordy:** The department showing the best performance... (6 words)

**Concise:** The best-performing department... (4 words)

**8. Change Passive Verbs into Active Verbs**

**Wordy:** An account was opened by Mrs. Simms. (7 words)

**Concise:** Mrs. Simms opened an account. (5 words)

**Wordy:** Your figures were checked by the research department. (8 words)

**Concise:** The research department checked your figures. (6 words)