

Course: Written expression

Level: 2nd year LMD

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Lesson: Wordiness

Definition

Wordiness is taking more words than necessary to make your point. It results from many resources. Many of us have learned to pad writing with all sorts of empty phrases to reach length requirements for academic writing. Wordiness also tends to occur when we are struggling to clarify our ideas or in cases of tiredness or inability to think clearly.

Strategies for eliminating wordiness

Make your writing clear and forceful by cutting words and phrases that add nothing to your meaning. Scrutinize empty phrases and needless repetition when stating your thoughts. You can eliminate wordiness in your writing if you:

1. Omit the filler phrase “it is”, “there is”, and “there are” at the beginning of sentences.

Wordy: It is expensive to upgrade computer systems.

Concise: Upgrading computer systems is expensive.

Wordy: there are many factors leading to divorce.

Concise: many factors lead to divorce.

2. Omit “which” or “that” altogether when possible:

Wordy: because the fluid, which was brown and poisonous, was dumped into the river, the company that was negligent had to shut down.

Concise: because the brown poisonous fluid was dumped into the river, the negligent company had to shut down.

Wordy: Kate, who is a teacher, has been promoted.

Concise: Kate, a teacher, has been promoted.

3. Substitute strong verbs for “tion” and “sion” words whenever possible.

Wordy: I submitted an application for the job.

Concise: I applied for a job.

4. Removing nouns: Your message can become confused and lengthy when you use a wordy noun phrase instead of a verb. Instead of saying “give considerations” say “consider”. Here is a list of some common noun phrases and the verb replacements.

Make a discovery —→ *discover*

Perform an analysis of —→ *analyze*

Take action on —→ *act*

Create a reduction in —→ *reduce*

Engage in preparation —→ *prepare*

5. Avoid redundant phrases (words implied by other words in the same sentence): a redundant phrase indicates something twice: *visible to the eye, large in size* and so on.

Wordy: the central character in this novel is a mysterious figure beyond understanding.

Concise: the central character in this novel is a mysterious figure.

The following list includes some common redundancies. Whenever you find a redundancy, get rid of it:

Advanced forward, autobiography of life, basic fundamentals, circle around, close proximity, continue to go on, disappear from view, factual truth, important essential, refer back, repeat again, round in shape, blue in color.

6. Avoid empty phrases and replace them with single words: empty phrases do little more than adding useless words to your writing. Whenever they appear in your work; get rid of them or revise them.

Wordy: in the world today, eighteen years old find little joy in the revival of draft registration.

Concise: Today, eighteen years old find little joy in the revival of draft registration.

Often, a single word will do the work of an entire empty phrase. When this is the case, substitute the single word for the phrase:

<i>All the time</i>	<i>always</i>
<i>At this point in time</i>	<i>now</i>
<i>At any point in time</i>	<i>whenever</i>
<i>During the time that</i>	<i>while</i>
<i>By means of</i>	<i>by</i>
<i>Due the fact that</i>	<i>because</i>
<i>For the purpose of</i>	<i>for</i>
<i>In the event that</i>	<i>if</i>
<i>Regardless of the fact that</i>	<i>although</i>
<i>Until such times</i>	<i>until</i>
<i>In the final analysis</i>	<i>finally</i>

7. **Avoid clichés:** a cliché or trite phrase is an expression that was fresh and striking at one time but its overuse has become stale. Here are some examples of the trite phrases and the replacement words:

<i>Every effort will be made</i>	<i>we will try</i>
<i>Thank you in advance</i>	<i>thank you</i>
<i>With reference to</i>	<i>about</i>

8. **Avoid writing compound prepositions:** it is easy to replace compound prepositions with single words. There are some more examples of wordiness caused by compound prepositions and the shorter form:

<i>For the amount of</i>	<i>for</i>
<i>The manner in which</i>	<i>how</i>
<i>At a later date</i>	<i>later</i>

9. **Avoid needless repetition:** at time you will repeat words for parallel structure emphasis. However, careless repetition leads to awkward wordy sentences.

Wordy: The grizzil bear is probably the world's most ferocious bear.

Concise: The grizzil is probably the world's most ferocious bear.

Wordy: The teacher decided to give extra work to his students. The main reason of giving extra work to his students was that students were so dependent on their teachers.

Concise: The teacher decided to give extra work to his students because they were so dependent on their teachers.

10. Limit or avoid phrases describing your attitudes and writing strategies.

Wordy: It seems to me that students should learn autonomously.

Concise: students should learn autonomously.

Wordy: The aim of the meeting is to inform you of my opinion that all students must attend their classes.

Concise: all students must attend their classes.

Practice: revise the following sentences for wordiness.

1. He found his roommate who lived with him to be attractive in appearance.
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2. He was really late to his English class due to the fact that he had to finish his math test.
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3. Although they were several in number, the street gang feared the police.
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4. During the time when I lived in South Carolina, it was my intention to go to college in Florida
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5. One time when I went to the park, my friend, whose name is Edward, went with me and we had fun due to the fact that it was a nice day out.
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6. It is hard to find a good job at the present time.
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7. Mary left school due to the fact that she had severe depression symptoms.
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8. In my essay paper, I wrote about my absolute hopes and desires.
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9. The honest truth is that I really do not like mushroom very much.
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10. What is your basic understanding of predestination?
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11. At this point in time we can't ascertain the reason as to why the screen door was left open.
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12. My sister, who is employed as a nutritionist at the University of Michigan, recommends the daily intake of megadoses of Vitamin C.
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13. It is to be hoped that we discover a means to create an absolutely proper and fitting tribute to Professor Espinoza.
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14. Bothered by allergies, a condition that made them sneeze, some of preschool children had sinus troubles that caused them to miss several days in nursery school this spring.
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