

8 WORDINESS

Wordiness is a trap all writers fall into occasionally. Your goal should always be to write as clearly and simply as possible, using no more words than you need to express yourself accurately. Certainly, you may add words to enhance meaning, but you should never add words to make an essay longer when you have nothing more substantial to say or in a mistaken effort to make yourself sound more sophisticated. Be especially alert to words with overlapping meaning (redundancy) or any phrase using several words where a shorter phrase will suffice.

TO AVOID WORDINESS

1. Use the exact word instead of a wordy phrase.

Wordy: The letter was sent by someone who did not sign a name.

Concise: The letter was sent anonymously.

2. Avoid unnecessary *it is* or *there is/are* constructions.

Wordy: It is often beneficial for a cook to assemble all ingredients before beginning a recipe.

Concise: A cook should assemble all ingredients before beginning a recipe.

Wordy: There are many people who feel their vote does not count.

Concise: Many people feel their vote does not count.

3. Avoid redundant phrases (phrases that repeat ideas).

Wordy: The room, circular in shape, was unusual and architecturally exciting.

Concise: The circular room was unusual and architecturally exciting.

Wordy: The wolf's howl was audible to the ear for miles.

Concise: The wolf's howl was audible for miles.

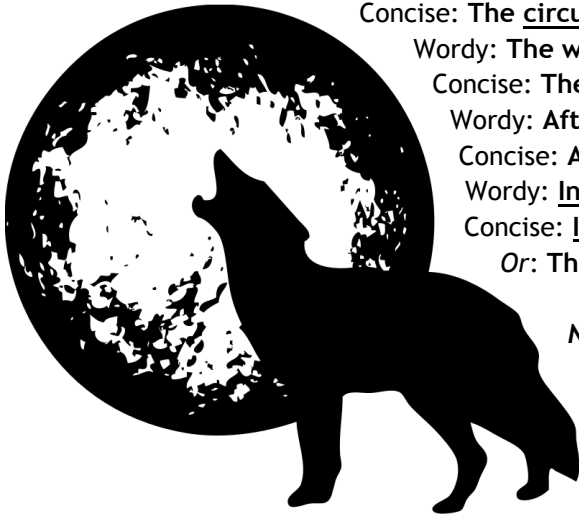
Wordy: After you finish the soda, return the bottles back to the store.

Concise: After you finish the soda, return the bottle to the store.

Wordy: In my opinion, I believe that the death penalty is necessary.

Concise: I believe that the death penalty is necessary.

Or: The death penalty is necessary.



Note: Writers are often wordy when they are afraid of being too blunt. Say what you mean!

4. Avoid wordy or empty phrases.

Wordy: The picnic was canceled in view of the fact that it was raining.

Concise: The picnic was canceled because of rain.

Wordy: I do not have that information at this point in time.

Concise: I do not have that information now.

Or: I don't know yet.

PASSIVE VOICE:

Passive voice sentences are sentences in which the subject receives the action. Active voice sentences, in which the subject is performing the action, are usually stronger. Passive voice sentences tend to be either vague or wordy.

Passive: **Randal's brain was eaten.** (Vague. Who ate his brain?)

Passive: **Randal's brain was eaten by zombies.** (Wordy)

Active: **Zombies ate Randal's brain.** (Yum!)



PHRASES TO AVOID

Wordy

at this point in time

the questions as to whether

he is a man who

in the not too distant future

in spite of the fact that

of the opinion that

for the simple reason that

due to the fact that

owing to the fact that

made contact with

Concise

now

whether

he

soon

although

think

because

because

because

met

Redundant

circled around

rectangular (or square, round, etc) in shape

final completion

past history

free gift

few in number

both together

exact same reasons

join together

large (or small) in size

pink in color

visible to the eye (audible to the ear)

proceed forward

enter in

continue on

Concise

circled

omit "in shape"

completion

history

gift

few

both

same reasons

join

large (small)

pink

visible (audible)

proceed

enter

continue