

Strategies for Eliminating Wordiness

You can eliminate wordiness in your writing if . . .

you mark sections of your writing that you struggled to produce. If you had a hard time getting your ideas down on paper, chances are you included some "false starts" or filler phrases in your writing, something like the "ahems," "uhs," and "okays" that occur when we're speaking and formulating our ideas at the same time. This is natural. Don't worry about fillers when you're writing. But after you're done with your draft, pass through

Patterns of Wordiness, cntd.

4. 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.

5. Replace passive verbs with active verbs. In passive constructions, the subject of the sentence is being acted upon; in active constructions, the subject is the actor.

Wordy

Rain forests are being destroyed by uncontrolled logging.

Concise

Uncontrolled logging is destroying rain forests.

6. Change "is" or "was" when they occur alone to a strong verb.

Wordy

A new fire curtain is necessary for the stage.

Concise

The stage needs a new fire curtain.

7. Replace "is," "are," "was," "were," or "have + an -ing word" to a simple present or past tense verb.

Wordy

The South African government was undergoing significant changes.

Concise

The South African government underwent significant changes.

8. Replace "should," "would," or "could" with strong verbs.

Wordy

The environmental council could see several solutions.

Concise

The environmental council saw several solutions.

Patterns of Wordiness, cntd.

9. Substitute strong verbs for "-tion" and "-sion" words whenever possible.

Wordy

I submitted an application for the job.

Concise

I applied for the job.

10. Repl9c

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AVOID REDUNDANCY

INSTEAD OF THIS

