

UMD ARC/Writing & Reading Center

EFFECTIVE SENTENCES

Concise writing conveys the most meaning in the fewest words. Many strategies for sentence structure follow this rule:

Eliminating Redundancy

A redundant expression says the same thing twice in different words.

a [dead] corpse
the reason [why]
enter [into]
past [experience]
mix [together]
mental [awareness]

Avoiding Repetition

Unnecessary repetition clutters writing and weakens meaning.

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

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

Application

Make these sentences more concise by eliminating redundancies and needless repetition.

1. She is a woman who works hard.
2. I am aware of the fact that Sam is a trustworthy person.
3. David completed his assignment in a short period of time.
4. I have been able to rely on my parents in the past.

Avoiding Needless Phrases:

To be, as well as **that** and **which** phrases, can often be cut.

Wordy sentences:

- She seems [to be] upset.

- I find some of my classmates [to be] brilliant.
- The Ford Mustang is a car [that is] worth buying.
- This [is a] math problem [that] is impossible to solve.

Avoiding Excessive Prepositions:

A preposition is a word placed before a noun or noun equivalent indicating its relation to a verb. (at, from, with, of)

Wordy: Some **of** the members **of** the committee made these recommendations.

Concise: Some committee member made these recommendations.

Wordy: I gave the money **to** Sarah.

Concise: I gave Sarah the money.

Application

Make these sentences more concise by eliminating the needless use of **it, to be, is, of, that,** and **which**.

1. Our summer house, which is located on Cape Cod, is for sale.
2. Writing must be practiced in order for it to become effective.
3. It is necessary for me to leave immediately.
4. Another reason the job is attractive is because the salary is excellent.

Eliminate Clutter Words

Clutter words stretch a message without adding meaning. Common examples include; **very, definitely, quite, extremely, rather, somewhat, really actually, situation, aspect.**

I [definitely] will be there.

The policeman at the party didn't know what to do [in that situation].

Delete Needless Prefaces

Instead of delaying the new information in your sentence, get right to the point.

Wordy: [I am writing this letter because] I wish to apply for the position of resident assistant.

Wordy: [The conclusion that we draw is that] writing is hard work.

Delete Needless Qualifiers

Qualifiers such as **I feel**, **it would seem**, **I believe**, **in my opinion**, and **I think** express uncertainty or soften the tone and impact of a statement.

Needless: [It seems that] I have wrecked the family car.
[It would appear that] I have lost your credit card

Appropriate: Despite Frank's poor academic performance last semester, he will, **I think**, do well this semester. (Emphasizes an opinion about what is not a certainty.)

Application

Make these sentences more concise by replacing or changing and clearing out clutter words, needless prefaces, and qualifiers.

1. I have a preference for BMWs.
2. Your conclusion is in agreement with mine.
3. We request the formation of a committee of students for the review of grading discrepancies.
4. I find Susan to be an industrious and competent employee.
5. In my opinion, winter is an awful season.

Compiled by UMD Writing and Reading Center Tutor , 2003