CONCISENESS: AVOID WORDINESS

A sentence is wordy if it uses more words than necessary to express an idea. Wordiness hampers clear expression – and often clear thinking as well.

- **Avoid expressions like **it is/it was and there is/there was **at the beginning of sentences.**
  - It was on Friday that we missed class. When we came back Monday, there was a new teacher waiting for us.
  - On Friday, we missed class. When we came back Monday, a new teacher was waiting for us.

- **Avoid unnecessary passive constructions**
  - The assignment was given to the students by their teacher.
  - The teacher gave the students the assignment.

- **Avoid “to be” constructions when you can use active verbs instead.**
  - The little girl was envious of her big sister.
  - The little girl envied her big sister.
  - The mayor is of the opinion that the revisions of the code are not changes she could accept.
  - The mayor says that she cannot accept the revisions of the code.

- **Avoid nouns formed from verbs if you can use the verb instead.**
  - The council president gave his support to the council’s attempts to lower property taxes.
  - The council president supported the council’s attempts to lower property taxes.
  - The building had the appearance of having been renovated.
  - The building appeared to be renovated.

- **Combine sentences and reduce clauses and phrases wherever possible.**
  - The Titanic was discovered seventy-three years after being sunk by an iceberg. The wreck was located in the Atlantic by a team of French and American scientists. The titanic, which was a huge ocean liner, sank in 1912. More than fifteen hundred travelers on that voyage died in the shipwreck.
  - Seventy-three years after being sunk by an iceberg in 1912, a team of French and American scientists located the Titanic, a huge ocean liner, in the Atlantic. More than fifteen hundred passengers died in the shipwreck.

- **Eliminate empty words and phrases. Eliminate the following phrases from your memory altogether: as a matter of fact, in fact, in a very real sense, the point I’m trying to make, in the case of, factor (as in “cost factor”).** Revise the wordy phrases listed below as suggested.
  - John missed the game due to the fact that he was sick.
  - John missed the game because he was sick.
  - In light of the fact that jobs are scarce, I am going back to school.
  - Because jobs are scarce, I am going back to school.
  - The child touched the snake in a reluctant manner.
  - The child touched the snake reluctantly.
  - His comment was of an offensive nature.
  - His comment was offensive.
  - We are in the process of reviewing your application.
  - We are reviewing your application.
  - Work crews arrived for the purpose of fixing the potholes.
  - Work crews arrived to fix the potholes.
  - In the event that you are late, I will leave.
  - If you are late, I will leave.