

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.*