Concise Writing

Writing with concision means intentionally using language and sentence structure to improve clarity and cut excess or unnecessary elements. Listed below are strategies you can use to make your writing more concise. Remember to always work with your audience and assignment in mind.

Limit Modifying Phrases

Eliminate phrases that modify the noun if they do not clarify the meaning of the sentence or if they include unnecessary information.

> **Wordy:** The dishwasher *in the kitchen* is broken.
> **Concise:** The dishwasher is broken.

Minimize Prepositional Phrases

Avoid unnecessary prepositional phrases (preposition plus a noun).

> **Wordy:** The assignment *on writing about discourse communities* is due *on Friday by 5:00 p.m.*
> **Concise:** The discourse community writing assignment is due by Friday at 5:00 p.m.

Avoid Unnecessary Relative Clauses

Relative clauses beginning with *that*, *who*, and *which* should be changed to short phrases, or deleted.

> **Wordy:** The candidate *who ran for president* was likeable.
> **Concise:** The presidential candidate was likeable.

Reword Infinitive Phrases

Eliminate infinitive phrases (*to* plus a verb) by using another form of the verb.

> **Wordy:** The shortage of essential items has caused customers *to become dissatisfied*.
> **Concise:** The shortage of essential items has dissatisfied customers.

Modify Other Phrases

Change wordy phrases into single words or direct expressions when possible.

> **Wordy:** *At this point in time*, add the eggs to the mixture.
> **Concise:** *Now*, add the eggs to the mixture.

Use Active Voice

Avoid passive-voice phrases by changing them to active voice.

> **Wordy:** An account *was created* by Emma Garcia last week.
> **Concise:** Emma Garcia *created* an account last week.

Eliminate Extra or Empty Words

Use one word that captures the main idea instead of multiple words that approximate it.

> **Wordy:** The view was *pretty*, *nice*, and *interesting*.
> **Concise:** The view was *breathtaking*.

Avoid Inflated Writing

Use common and precise language whenever possible. Using overly academic language to impress readers often makes writing sound inflated.

> **Wordy:** My *sanguineous* professor *disesteemed* my *election* of "*grandiloquent*."
> **Concise:** My *wise* professor *disapproved of* my *choice* of *big* words.

Avoid Nominalization

Nominalization occurs when a verb functions as a noun. Avoid this by using one active verb instead.

> **Wordy:** The employee *made the decision* to quit their job.
> **Concise:** The employee *decided* to quit their job.

Omit Redundant Word Pairs

When using word pairs, look to see if both words are necessary.

> **Wordy:** This gift is an *unexpected surprise*.
> **Concise:** This gift is a *surprise*.