

# Conciseness

From Purdue's OWL site

# Why Be Concise?

- language as we work out early ideas
- We pick weaker words or sentence constructions because we're still figuring out what to say
- So revising for conciseness isn't just about brevity—instead, you're aiming to be more precise

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## **more powerful and specific words.**

- Often, we use several small and ambiguous words to express a concept
- But there are lots of nouns and verbs out there—it's just a matter of finding the right one
- Brainstorming or using a thesaurus may help you to find the right word

## EXAMPLES: Replace vague words w/ more powerful/specific words.

- **Wordy:** The politician **talked about several of the merits of** after-school programs in his speech (8 words)
- **Wordy:** The politician **praised** after-school programs in his speech. (8 words)

## **EXAMPLES: Replace vague words w/ more powerful/specific words.**

- **Wordy:** Suzie **believed but could not confirm** that Billy **had feelings of affection** for her. (14 words)
- **Concise:** Suzie **assumed** that Billy **adored** her. (6 words)

## EXAMPLES: Replace vague words w/ more powerful/specific words.

- **Wordy:** Working as a **pupil under someone who develops photos** was an experience that **really helped me learn a lot.** (20 words)
- **:** Working as a **photo technician's apprentice** was an **educational** experience. (10 words)

## 2. Interrogate every word in a sentence

- unique to the sentence, it can be deleted or replaced
- Common culprits are
  - 
  - and equal, pitch black, large in size, at an early time, etc.)
  - Using passive voice unnecessarily (“It was often said to the students...” or “The ball was thrown to Bob” instead of “Teachers often told the students...” or “Jim threw Bob the ball...”

# **EXAMPLES: Interrogate every word in a sentence**

- **Wordy:** The teacher demonstrated **some of the various ways and** methods for cutting words from my essay **that I had written for class.** (22 words)
- **Concise:** The teacher demonstrated methods for cutting words from my essay. (10 words)

# EXAMPLES: Interrogate every word in a sentence

- **Wordy** Winwood formed a new band of musicians together in 1969, giving it the ironic name of Blind Faith because early speculation that was spreading everywhere about the band suggested that the new musical group would be good enough to rival the earlier bands that both men had been in, Cream and Traffic, which people had really liked and had been very popular. (32 words)
- **Concise:** Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band in 1969, ironically naming it Blind Faith because speculation suggested that the group would rival the musicians' previous popular bands, Cream and Traffic. (32 words)

## 3. Combine Sentences

- Some information does not require a full sentence, and can easily be inserted into another sentence without losing any of its value

# EXAMPLES: Combine Sentences

- **Wordy:** Ludwig's castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness. By his death, he had commissioned **three castles**.  
(18 words)
- **Concise:** Ludwig's **three castles** are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness  
(11 words)

# EXAMPLES: Combine Sentences

- **Wordy:** The supposed crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. This crash is rumored to have occurred in **1947**. (24 words)
- **Concise:** The supposed **1947** crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. (16 words)

# Complete Worksheet

- Revise the 11 example sentences independently.
- Compare answers with a partner.
- Then, with partners, check your answers against the Purdue OWL answers. Are your answers shorter than theirs?

# Revision Cycle

- Pick either 1 paragraph or 5 sample sentences from your draft. Make each sentence more concise using the strategies introduced today.
- Then, exchange drafts with a partner. On your partner's draft, find either 1 paragraph or 5 sample sentences to make more concise.
- Together, pick one especially effective revision to share with the class.