

Writing Concisely

1. Watch for conjunctions

We have to use conjunctions, but evaluate whether all the terms in the list are necessary and distinct. If some words say the same thing, omit redundant ones.

He tried out and auditioned for the play. → He auditioned for the play.
We tried many ways and methods. → We tried many methods.

2. Watch for prepositions

Of course we have to use prepositions; however, too many of them in one sentence may indicate wordiness and make it difficult for your reader to follow.

Wordy: In order to correct the mistake, he went to the office to talk to the person who is in charge of paperwork that has been misfiled due to clerical errors on the part of a secretary who is always lazy.

Corrected: To fix the mistake, he visited the office and talked to the manager about the paperwork the lazy secretary misfiled.

3. Watch for nominalizations

Nominalizations might be called *hidden verbs*. The real verb is hiding inside a noun that is the subject of a weak verb.

to do an experiment → to experiment
conducted an investigation → investigated

4. Watch for word choice

Sometimes we use 5 words when 1 word will work.

due to the fact → because
the great number of → many
is applicable to → applies
in the vicinity of → near
for a period of → for

5. Watch for simple present/past vs. progressive (as appropriate)

One way to write concisely is to use the simple present/past tense wherever appropriate.

We are expecting no results. → We expect no results.
We were anticipating finding new info. → We anticipated finding new info.
We were searching all day. → We searched all day.