

# Writing Concisely: Transcript

## Slide 1:

Thank you for watching the Purdue OWL's vidcast on writing concisely. Concise writing is not necessarily better writing; however, you may find yourself in various writing situations where concision is encouraged. You may want to be more direct with your audiences, you may have a restrictive word count that you need to adhere to, or you might receive feedback that seeks clarity. When writing, I don't recommend restricting yourself to be concise. In fact, be as wordy as you'd like, then reconsider your sentence structures and word choices later. In this vidcast, we'll think about some of the choices available to a writer to write concisely or make edits for concision.

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The first concision strategy we'll look at concerns nominalizations. Nominalizations are often defined as verbs, and sometimes adjectives, being used as nouns. These can add words to your sentences—since the verb becomes a noun, writers often need more prepositions, articles, or other parts of speech to craft their sentences. Nominalizations are often simple changes; for example, the phrase “came to a decision” simply becomes “decided,” and “conducted an investigation” becomes “investigated.”

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Another reliable concision strategy replaces vague words with powerful, specific words. In general, using more specific, powerful words is a core strategy for writing concisely.

As you read your writing, you might come across a phrase like: “talked about the merits of.” When you see a wordy phrase, ask yourself: “Have I used **ONLY** the essential words needed to communicate my message to the reader?” You might determine that a phrase like “talked about the merits of” could be simplified to a stronger word like “touted.” Other examples might be “believed but could not confirm,” becoming “assumed.” A word like “assumed” might capture that same idea in less words.

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Another concision strategy is combining sentences. Sometimes a piece of information does not require its own sentence and can be incorporated into another sentence by adding conjunctions, subordinations, or simply rephrasing.

Let's review these two sentences: "Ludwig's castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness. By his death, he had commissioned three castles."

A revision that combines these sentences might look something like this: "Before his death, Ludwig commissioned three astounding castles that married beauty and madness." This revision is a 5-word reduction and does not lose any of the key ideas in the original two sentences. It simply reorganizes information.

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Another simple way to address wordiness is further interrogation of word choice. Oftentimes, short phrases can be condensed with different word choices. The phrase "Due to the fact that" becomes "because;" or "in the vicinity of" could become "near." Again, you may identify these phrases and ask yourself, "Have I used too many words to express a simple, unimportant, or obvious idea?"

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As you interrogate each word in a sentence, you may continue to find words that are not providing anything unique or important to the sentence. If that is the case, you may want to replace or even completely delete these words.

Here's one example of a sentence rewritten to address extraneous words. The first sentence reads: "The teacher demonstrated some of the various ways and methods for cutting words from my essay that I had written for class."

As you interrogate this sentence, you might notice redundant wording like "ways and methods." This phrase repeats an idea and does not add anything new to the sentence. The phrase "that I had written for class" may also be redundant since context clues like "teacher" and "essay" already situate this text as a course assignment. Therefore, a rewrite might look like this: "The teacher demonstrated methods for cutting words from my essay."

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Sometimes, words can be entirely eliminated from a sentence without sacrificing the main idea. Some words ripe for elimination are words that explain the obvious or provide excessive detail.

“Filler” words that try to determine or modify the meaning of a word without adding any value can also be removed. Examples of words and phrases like this include “kind of, sort of, actually, generally, specifically,” and more.

You might delete repetitive wording that doesn’t provide anything unique to the content of the sentence. An example of this might be a redundant word pairing like “completely finished.” Because the word “finished” implies “completion,” this pairing is redundant.

Finally, redundant categories like “large in size” are also prime for deletion. Readers will know that “large” refers to the size of something, so you can simply say “large.”

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The last strategy we will explore is the PACE method. PACE stands for: Prepositions, Actions, Characters, and Eliminations. Here’s how it works.

As you review your document, or a section of your document, circle the prepositions you see. When you return to revise, try to eliminate as many of these prepositions as possible.

Next, draw boxes around “to be” verbs like “is” or “are.” Ask yourself: Where is the action in this sentence? “Is” does not communicate the action of a sentence, so your job is to change these “to be” verbs into more powerful, specific verbs that illustrate the action of a sentence.

Now that you have identified the action in the sentence, move the “character” performing this action into the subject position. In other words, make sure it is clear which characters or subjects in your sentences are completing the actions.

Finally, look for words or phrases that are good candidates for elimination—that is, look for any redundancies or sentences that take a long time to get to the point and trim the excess language.

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Check out the rest of our videos that include other tips for editing and revising your work in purposeful ways.

For more information on writing concisely, look to the Purdue OWL for additional resources.