Concise Writing

What is concise writing?

- Writers often fill sentences with unnecessary words that can be removed.
- You need to always revise your work for conciseness during the final stage of the writing process.
- Revising for conciseness involves eliminating any words that are not essential to communicating your message.

Compare the following examples:

- **WORDY**: “In my honest opinion, I deeply feel that a really firm comprehensive understanding of the basic fundamentals of English is an essential prerequisite to a person’s success in college or university, the business world, and the community at large.” (39 words)

- **CONCISE**: “An understanding of English fundamentals is a prerequisite to success in college or university, business, and the community.” (18 words)

- Concise writing = BETTER WRITING!

Here are 8 areas you should focus on when editing for conciseness:

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<th>Term &amp; Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Revision</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wordiness</strong>: Putting several words where one could go.</td>
<td>In my own personal opinion, I think that baseball is a very boring sport.</td>
<td>I think baseball is boring.</td>
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<td><strong>Redundancy</strong>: Saying the same thing twice</td>
<td>Mr. Smith is far from perfect and has many faults.</td>
<td>Mr. Smith has many faults.</td>
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<td><strong>Pretentious Language</strong>: Using overly complicated language.</td>
<td>The dog was more exuberant in emitting threatening sounds than in attempting to engage in physical assault.</td>
<td>The dog’s bark was worse than its bite.</td>
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<td><strong>Repetition</strong>: Repeating words unnecessarily.</td>
<td>If people look at the flowers, they’ll see that the color of the flowers is quite bright.</td>
<td>The flowers are brightly coloured.</td>
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<td><strong>Weak verbs</strong>: Look for and remove “to be” verbs: is, was, has been, will be, are, become.</td>
<td>The president was supportive of the council’s plans.</td>
<td>The president supported the council’s plans.</td>
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<td><strong>Needless adverbs</strong>: cut out any intensifying adverbs: “very,” “definitely,” “quite,” “completely.”</td>
<td>She really is trying very hard to quit smoking completely.</td>
<td>She is trying hard to quit smoking.</td>
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<td><strong>Long lead ins</strong>: Remove unnecessary introductory words and phrases.</td>
<td>I am writing you this email to let you know that I will not be coming into work on Friday, September 23.</td>
<td>I will not be coming into work on Friday, September 23.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weak expletives</strong>: Remove words like “there is”, “there are” &amp; “it is” from your sentences.</td>
<td>It is because Bob likes bananas that he eats them every day.</td>
<td>Bob eats bananas every day because he likes them.</td>
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EXERCISE: Working with a partner, revise these sentences to state their meaning in fewer words.

- (1) Start by asking “What is the message being conveyed?”
- (2) Identify problems using the Conciseness Checklist.
- (3) Re-write the sentence as clearly and concisely as possible.

(1) It can be said that the function of this department is the collection of accounts.

(2) I myself personally feel that there is absolutely no basis in fact for the idea that UFOs exist.

(3) Basically, I personally prefer modern contemporary furniture to really old antiques.

(4) I believe that, in all probability, this trend can be turned right around if we return back to basic fundamentals in our design process and introduce a few new innovations in our manufacturing process.

(5) Many have made the wise observation that when a stone is in motion rolling down a hill that that moving stone is not as likely to be covered all over with the kind of thick green moss that grows on stationary unmoving things, suggesting that those things haven’t moved in a long time and probably won’t move any time soon.

(6) Imagine a mental picture of someone engaged in the intellectual activity of trying to learn what the rules are to play the game of chess.

(7) It is because he dropped out of school that it was necessary for him to help support his family.

(8) There are many people who believe in capital punishment, while there are many other people who are against it; there are many opinions on this subject.

(9) For some people, they feel like they are being treated unfairly when asked to work overtime, but there are people out there who would be glad to work overtime.

(10) My understanding of the article was that it was generally about the defects of an increasingly demanding work oriented society.

(11) It is also my job to deal with the clients.

(12) There are people who have worked dayshifts and overtime for their entire life.