



Eliminating Wordiness

Wordiness is the tendency to use more words than necessary. Sometimes, students use wordiness to try and achieve a specific word count on an assignment. This can make sentences confusing because it obscures meaning and slows down the reader, which distracts from the overall message.

Examples and Causes

Multiple words where one or two would work

- **A greater number of** can be replaced with **more**.
- **Not sympathetic** can be replaced with **apathetic**.
- **The government was undergoing changes** can be replaced with **The government underwent changes**.
- **The engineers could see several problems with the proposal** can be replaced with **The engineers saw several problems with the proposal**.
- **I put in an application for the job** can be replaced with **I applied for the job**.

Substitutes for the use of “very”

- Very angry can be replaced with **irate**.
- Very happy can be replaced with **elated**.
- Very loud can be replaced with **thundering or booming**.
- Very wet can be replaced with **sopping**.
- Very dry can be replaced with **arid**.
- Very bad snow storm can be replaced with **blizzard**.
- Very heavy rainfall can be replaced with **downpour**.

Always check for synonyms if you're looking to reduce the wordiness of your phrasing!



Implicitly redundant sentences

- The builders went to work **at the construction site**.
⇒ **Explanation:** The reader assumes builders work at a construction site; only provide the extra information if it clarifies something unexpected.
- As the plane touched down **on the runway**, we all sighed.
⇒ **Explanation:** Unless the plane was expected to land elsewhere, “on the runway” is redundant.

Explicitly redundant sentences

- **Left alone**, unattended children are at risk.
⇒ **Explanation:** By definition, a thing left alone is unattended, so “left alone” can be deleted. Instead: Unattended children are at risk.
- The blood donors gave **blood** all morning long
⇒ **Explanation:** Since we know that they are blood donors, we know they are donating blood. Instead: Blood donations lasted all morning.

Irrelevant information

- The rainstorm was intense, with massive hailstones **falling on the town** and thunder that shook the house.
⇒ **Explanation:** “On the town” adds no value, unless the writer wishes to clarify that they weren’t falling elsewhere.
- **In reading the book**, it is apparent that the authors revisit the same idea several times throughout it.
⇒ **Explanation:** “In reading the book” does not contribute to the basic message of the sentence. Instead: The authors revisit the same idea several times throughout the book.



Fragments of a single idea

- He drove his car to work. It was raining. The car was old and rusty, and the roof leaked.
 - ⇒ **Explanation:** These could be combined into one sentence: The roof of his old, rusty car leaked as he drove to work in the rain.
- There were more than four-hundred people on the stage. It was not designed to hold that kind of weight. When they started dancing, it collapsed.
 - ⇒ **Explanation:** These could be combined into one sentence: Because the stage was not designed to hold the four-hundred people on it, it collapsed when they started dancing.
- He had never been to Washington. However, the locals were friendly, and he found it easy get around by asking them for directions.
 - ⇒ **Explanation:** The sentence retains its meaning when “that can describe it” is removed. Although he had never been to Washington, he got around easily by asking the friendly locals for directions.
- Ruby gives Lauren a book called a siddur. A siddur is a prayer book that is used in the Jewish faith.
 - ⇒ **Explanation:** The two sentences above can be significantly simplified in a couple of ways: Ruby gives Lauren a siddur—a Jewish prayer book. Ruby gives Lauren a Jewish prayer book called a siddur.

Extra words

- **We also see in the play** how the characters define the roll of women in the workplace.
 - ⇒ Removing “We also see in the play how” keeps the focus of the sentence clearer.
- Girls are not given the same amount of **instructional time** as boys.
 - ⇒ Replacing “instructional time” with “instruction” streamlines the sentence.
- The author mentions safety culture has many characteristics **that can describe it**.
 - ⇒ The sentence retains its meaning when “that can describe it” is removed.

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.