



# Eliminating Wordiness

## What is Wordiness?

**Wordiness is the tendency to use more words than necessary.** This can make sentences confusing, obscuring meaning, slowing down the reader, and distracting 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.**

**THE PARTICULAR CASE 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**

## IMPLICITLY REDUNDANT STATEMENTS:

The builders went to work **at the construction site**.

*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.

*Unless the plane was expected to land elsewhere, “on the runway” is redundant.*

## EXPLICITLY REDUNDANT STATEMENTS:

**Left alone, unattended** children are at risk.

*By definition, a thing left alone is unattended, so “unattended” can be deleted.*

*Instead: **Unattended children are at risk.***

The **blood** donors gave **blood** all morning long.

*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.

*“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.

*“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.**

*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.**

*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.**

*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.**

*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.*