

## Eliminating Redundancy

### Getting the Idea

**Wordiness** is the use of more words than necessary to convey meaning. Wordiness is the opposite of conciseness, which describes writing that is direct and uses carefully chosen words. Read the sentence below:

The bookstore, which is situated in the local area, has very many customers as a result of its having a really wide selection of books and customer service that is friendly.

This sentence is wordy because it includes words and phrases that either do not contribute anything meaningful or express a simple idea in a convoluted way. Here is one way to make this sentence concise:

The local bookstore has many customers, due to its wide selection of books and friendly customer service.

Note that the revised sentence eliminates the words *very* and *really*. These words may be necessary at times, but they are often overused. In addition, the phrase *which is situated in the local area* uses seven words when only one adjective, *local*, will do. The phrase *as a result of its having* is replaced with the words *due to*. Finally, instead of using the phrase *that is friendly*, place the adjective in front of the noun and eliminate two words.

You can eliminate wordiness by choosing stronger, more specific verbs.

**wordy:** The movie has to do with the life of Vincent van Gogh.

**concise:** The movie portrays the life of Vincent van Gogh.

Another way to avoid wordiness is to use the **active voice** instead of the **passive voice**.

**wordy:** The agricultural programs bill was vetoed by the president.

**concise:** The president vetoed the agricultural programs bill.

Commonly used empty words and phrases also result in wordiness.

**wordy:** Ron cannot attend due to the fact that he is sick.

**concise:** Ron cannot attend because he is sick.

**wordy:** The homelessness that exists in this city is unacceptable.

**concise:** The homelessness in this city is unacceptable.

**wordy:** I am in the process of reviewing your application.

**concise:** I am reviewing your application.

**Redundancy** is the needless repetition of words and ideas. Like wordiness, redundancy uses more words than necessary, but redundant writing says the same thing twice. Read the following sentence:

If we cooperate together, we will accomplish our goals.

To cooperate *is* to work together, so the underlined phrase is redundant. To make the sentence concise, write:

If we cooperate, we will accomplish our goals.

Make sure that you do not use synonyms to say the same thing twice.

The soldier received a medal for his brave and courageous acts.

The chart below lists other redundant phrases.

Redundant Phrases		
circle around	added bonus	missing gap
close proximity	safe haven	revert back
each and every	advance warning	past history
free gift	descend down	sink down
usual custom	end result	unexpected surprise

## Coached Example 1

Read the paragraphs below. Then rewrite each one to eliminate wordiness or redundancy.

1. Globally, millions of people around the world suffer from and endure allergies. Allergies can have internal or external causes. Many allergies are minor and insignificant. However, some allergies have a tendency to be life-threatening and potentially deadly.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Hint** Look for words and phrases that find different ways of saying the same thing.

2. Saafir was perplexed and puzzled by Tyra's actions. He had given her a bracelet, but she had returned it back to him without an explanation. He knew from past experience that Tyra could be moody, but he kind of wished he knew what he had done wrong.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Hint** Consider the meaning of each word and eliminate repetition.

## Coached Example 2

Read the paragraphs below. Answer the questions that follow.

This Friday is the premiere of the much-anticipated spring musical. It will be held at the auditorium in the school. With a cast of thirty students, this is the biggest production ever! Tickets are only \$10 dollars. Profits will be used by Mr. Williams to buy musical instruments for the music department. Doors open at 7 p.m. at night, so be on time!

1. Which sentence from the passage is NOT wordy or redundant?
  - A. It will be held at the auditorium in the school.
  - B. With a cast of thirty students, this is the biggest production ever!
  - C. Profits will be used by Mr. Williams to buy musical instruments for the music department.
  - D. Doors open at 7 p.m. at night, so be on time!

**Hint** Reread each answer choice carefully.

The Venus flytrap obtained its name from what it does in effect to catch insects. The leaves of this plant are covered with short, stiff hairs called trigger hairs. When an insect bends these hairs, the two lobes of the leaves snap shut, trapping the insect inside. The trap works like a stomach, secreting digestive juices that slowly dissolve the insect.

2. Which is the BEST way to make the first sentence more concise?
  - A. The Venus flytrap obtained its name from its technique for catching insects.
  - B. The Venus flytrap obtained its name from what it does in a sense to catch insects.
  - C. The Venus flytrap obtained its name from its actions involving catching insects.
  - D. The Venus flytrap obtained its name from how it acts to catch insects.

**Hint** Descriptive nouns and strong verbs are more likely to be concise.

## Lesson Practice 1

Use the Writing Guide to help you understand the passage.

### Writing Guide

Which words in the same sentence are synonyms?

Changing statements from passive to active can eliminate wordiness.

## The Princess and the Unlucky Frog

- 1 A long time ago, in an ancient kingdom by the sea, there lived a beautiful princess. Well, actually, she wasn't really beautiful. If truth be told, her looks were rather ordinary and commonplace. However, since this is a fairy tale, we shall pretend that she was a vision of loveliness.
- 2 Anyway, this princess, whom we shall call Minerva, for lack of a better name, went out for a stroll in the royal garden one day. Before too much time had passed, she came across a frog sitting in the grass by a pond.
- 3 "Oh, my!" the princess cried out in delight. "Surely, this must be a handsome prince under an evil witch's spell! I shall kiss it and claim my husband."
- 4 So, the princess tiptoed quietly toward the frog. In her hand was the butterfly net she had conveniently brought with her to facilitate the plot development of this story. With a *swoosh*, the princess brought the net down on the sleeping frog. She closed off the net's opening and held up the helpless animal. Despite the frog's croaking protests, she kissed it repeatedly again and again.
- 5 Finally, when the realization came to her that the frog was just a frog, the princess sighed and let it go. The traumatized frog was never seen again.

Choose at least three sentences from this passage that are wordy or redundant. On the lines below, rewrite them concisely.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Lesson Practice 2

Use the Writing Guide to help you understand the passage.

### Writing Guide

Look for words that repeat ideas.

Think about what each word contributes to a sentence.

## The Fate of Stars

- 1 Although our sun is more than one hundred times the size of Earth, it is an average-size star. Stars of average size are destined to become white dwarfs. White dwarfs are stars that have used up and exhausted their nuclear fuel.
- 2 When stars are dying, they throw off their outer layers, gradually shrinking in size until only the core remains. This extremely hot core is called a white dwarf. No longer producing any energy, white dwarfs gradually cool down. Their light grows weaker until they become black dwarfs, or dead stars. Not all white dwarfs die a slow death. When a white dwarf is close enough to other stars to exert gravitational pull, it may draw in hydrogen and other matter from those stars into itself. The build-up of hydrogen will cause nuclear fusion, or a release of an enormous amount of energy. The star, which becomes very bright, is now called a nova.

1. Which phrase from the passage is redundant?
  - A. “exert gravitational pull”
  - B. “and other matter”
  - C. “used up and exhausted”
  - D. “becomes very bright”

2. Read this sentence.

**When stars are dying, they throw off their outer layers, gradually shrinking in size until only the core remains.**

Which word or phrase should be deleted to make this sentence more concise?

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| A. “throw off” | C. “in size” |
| B. “gradually” | D. “only”    |