<u>**Eliminate Wordiness**</u>

**By Alexandria Barr**

**Concise:** expressing much in few words; clear and brief.

**The Problem:**
Wordy sentences contain more words than necessary to convey their meaning. This stylistic problem can cause other problems, including run-on or confusing sentences. When writing and editing, keep *concision* in mind.

The tips below helped revise the following wordy paragraph:

I worked at Carnegie Mellon University as part of their REU program, which was funded by the National Science Foundation. This program focused on materials science and engineering. I worked under the supervision of Professor David Sholl and did research on a project entitled, "Computational Modeling of Hydrogen Purification through Metal Membranes." My research dealt with studying different metal membranes that can be used to purify hydrogen; by studying the permeability of the alloys, I was able to come up with a model that selected certain structures that would best purify hydrogen. This research program was a valuable experience and allowed me to apply what I learned in the classroom to a real life situation.

As part of Carnegie Mellon University's REU program funded by NSF, I worked in materials science and engineering under Professor David Sholl. My research, "Computational Modeling of Hydrogen Purification through Metal Membranes," investigated metal membranes that can be used to purify hydrogen. By studying the alloys' permeability, I developed a model that selected structures that would best purify hydrogen. This valuable research experience allowed me to apply my classroom knowledge to a real life problem.

## <u>Concision Tips</u>

## Avoid Redundancy/doubling

Do you repeat the same idea or word in one sentence? Are words used needlessly? Below are some examples; more examples can be found at:
http://home.comcast.net/~garbl/stylemanual/redundant.htm

> <u>Ex. 1:</u>  I worked on a project <u>entitled</u>, "Computational Modeling of Hydrogen Purification Through Metal Membranes."
>
> <u>Try:</u>  I worked on the project, "Computational Modeling of Hydrogen Purification Through Metal Membranes."

Ex. 2:  Albert is overweight because he is <u>constantly</u> eating <u>all the time</u>.

Try:  Albert is overweight because he is constantly eating.

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Ex. 3:  It was <u>compulsory</u> for Jan to attend the <u>required</u> meeting.

Try:  It was compulsory for Jan to attend the meeting.

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Ex. 4:  When writing examples, it is important for examples to be clear and understandable.

Try:  Most importantly, write clear examples.

Try:  Examples must be clear.

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Ex. 5:  People may drink in order to distract themselves from the negative aspects or problems within their lives. Another motive to drink is to celebrate.

Try:  People may drink to distract themselves from personal problems or to celebrate.

## Avoid Unnecessary Phrases *"It is"* and *"There are"*

Find a way to eliminate *"it is"* and *"there are"* phrases without changing the meaning of the sentence. Introductory phrases such as *"in the case of," "it may be said that," "it appears that,"* and *"needless to say"* may also be unnecessary.

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Ex. 1:  There have been many environmental concerns that suggest that we should find alternative fuel sources.

Try:  Many environmental concerns suggest that we should find alternative fuel sources.

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Ex. 2:  <u>There were</u> many times <u>when</u> results were different than expected, and <u>it was</u> during these times when I learned the most about persistence and honesty.

Try:  Many times results were different than expected, and during these times I learned the most about persistence and honesty.

Ex. 3:  It is clear that plant growth is impacted by exposure to sunlight.

Try:    Clearly, plant growth is impacted by exposure to sunlight.

Ex. 4:  It is rather difficult to find a person with red hair.

Try:    Red haired people are rather difficult to find.

Ex. 5:  There are many ways in which businesses can gain from applied economics.

Try:    Businesses can gain from applied economics in many ways.

Ex. 6:  There is a good restaurant for waffles called Eben's Hearth.

Try:    Eben's Hearth is a good restaurant for waffles.

Try:    Eben's Hearth is good for waffles.

Ex. 7:  It may be said that there is a strong positive correlation between physical activity and career success.

Try:    A strong positive correlation exists between physical activity and career success.

## Replace Nominalizations

Nominalizations are nouns made from verbs or adjectives that then require another verb.  For example, the nominalization "reach an agreement" is the wordy version of "agree."  The phrase "make an offer" uses three words to say "offer."

Ex. 1:  A person's intelligence can have a very significant impact on his/her scholastic ability.

Try:    Intelligence can significantly impact scholastic ability.

Ex. 2:  I performed an analysis of last week's experimental data.

Try:    I analyzed last week's experimental data.

| Ex. 3: | The researchers will perform an evaluation of the design. |
|---|---|
| Try: | The researchers will evaluate the design. |

## Use Active Voice Verbs, Avoid "is" verbs

For more information, go to the section on active vs. passive voice verbs:
http://clarkson.edu/writingcenter/Punctuation,%20Grammar,%20Style%20Aids.html

| Ex. 1: | It is clear that plant growth <u>is impacted</u> by exposure to sunlight. |
|---|---|
| Try: | Clearly, exposure to sunlight impacts plant growth. |

| Ex. 2 | This research program was a valuable experience and allowed me to apply what I learned in the classroom to a real life situation. |
|---|---|
| Try: | This valuable research allowed me to apply my knowledge to a real life problem. |

## Flowery or Pretentious Language:

Choose the most specific word in the appropriate tone. Readers value clear and simple sentences. Overly complex, "flowery" language can hinder communication.

| Ex.1: | My particular predilection favors the consumption of numerous quantities of edible seed carrying plant products. |
|---|---|
| Try: | I like to eat a lot of fruit. |

| Ex. 2: | Byron's employer suggested that the company's productivity level would be best aided by his engaging in a more rigorous work schedule. |
|---|---|
| Try: | Byron's employer suggested that he work more. |

## Delete expletives and relative pronouns

Expletives are words or phrases that provide no meaning to a statement.
A relative pronoun is used in place of a noun (who, what, that).
The relative pronoun may often be removed when referring to an object.

Ex. 1: <u>There are</u> [expletive] many different types of materials <u>that</u> [relative pronoun] are used in nanopolymer processing.

Try: Many different types of materials are used in nanopolymer processing.

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Ex. 2: <u>There are</u> five examples that will demonstrate the use of Dijkstra's Algorithm.

Try: Five examples will demonstrate the use of Dijkstra's Algorithm.

Try: Dijkstra's Algorithm can be demonstrated by five examples.

## Use Specific Vocabulary

A more specific word, for example a verb or noun, can often replace multiple, vague words.

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Ex. 1: My research <u>dealt with studying</u> different metal membranes that can be used to purify hydrogen.

Try: My research <u>studied</u> different metal membranes that might be used to purify hydrogen.

Try: I investigated the potential use of different metal membranes to purify hydrogen.

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Ex. 2: I <u>was able to come up with</u> a model that selected certain structures that would best purify hydrogen.

Try: I <u>developed</u> a model that selected structures that would best purify hydrogen.

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Ex. 3: If I did not <u>correctly map out</u> and follow a budget, <u>every one living at the house</u> would not be able to eat.

Try: If I did not <u>plan</u> and follow a budget, <u>my housemates</u> would not be able to eat.

Ex. 4: <u>Both of</u> my parents <u>never went</u> to college due to financial reasons.

Try: Neither of my parents attended college due to financial reasons.