
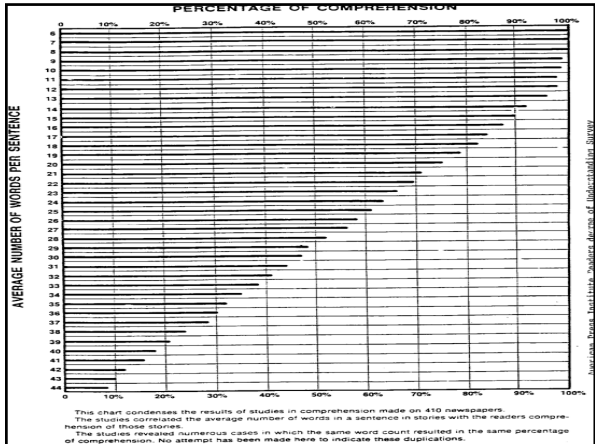


Eliminating Wordiness



1



Eliminating Wordiness

Use specific words:

Original: He walked aimlessly through the streets.

Revised: He wandered through the streets.

3

Original: The school superintendent said he will put emphasis on history.

Revised: The school superintendent said he will emphasize history.

Original: All of a sudden the president stopped speaking.

Revised: Suddenly, the president stopped speaking.

5

Original: The governor will have to face up to the problem.

Revised: The governor will have to face the problem.

6

Original: The mayor will head up the commission.

Revised: The mayor will head the commission.

Eliminate vague modifiers such as a lot, kind of, perhaps, quite, really, somewhat, sort of and very.

Original: He is very tired.

Revised: He is tired.

Or even better: He is exhausted.

8

Mason said he is very happy with the verdict.

Mason said he is happy with the verdict.

Mason said he is ecstatic with the verdict.

Avoid prepositional phrases that serve as nouns; they frequently weaken the sentence because of their unnecessary wordiness.

Original: Final adoption of the budget is scheduled for Tuesday.

Revised: The budget's final adoption is scheduled Tuesday.

10

Original:

Sentencing for Maxwell was delayed by the judge until the Probation Department completes its psychological examination of Maxwell.

Revised:

Maxwell's sentencing was delayed until the Probation Department completes its psychological examination.

11

Original: ...donations for the repair of the outdoor basketball courts...

Revised: ...donations to repair the outdoor basketball courts...

Avoid unnecessary verbosity; anytime you can compress a wordy phrase by replacing a half-dozen words with one or two, you've done the reader a favor.

13

Original: The police chief said the department had abandoned the use of stun guns due to the fact that their use many times resulted in lawsuits.

Revised: The police chief said the department stopped using stun guns because their use often resulted in lawsuits.

14

Original: Bill Smith, a U.N. representative, said he will respond to the famine even before technical teams lay the groundwork for an aid program. He said he plans to begin an emergency food airlift within days.

15

Revised: U.N. representative Bill Smith said he plans to begin an emergency food airlift within days rather than wait for an aid program to be established.

16

Original: Between now and Aug. 2, the Shubert Theater is presenting "The Secret Garden."

Edited: The Shubert Theater is presenting "The Secret Garden" through Aug. 2

17

Original: The play was a flop in spite of her good performance.

Revised: The play was a flop despite her good performance.

18

Original: Even though council members expressed different views about the project, they caught many in the audience by surprise when they reluctantly turned it down.

Revised: Although council members differed on the project, they surprised many in the audience when they reluctantly rejected it.

19

Eliminate obvious facts and unnecessary information in a story.

Original: Firefighters from Engine Co. 46, which responded to the call, had the fire out in 15 minutes.

Revised: Firefighters from Engine Co. 46 had the fire out in 15 minutes.

20

Original: County arson investigators, who are looking into the cause of the fire, plan to make an announcement Monday on their findings.

Revised: County arson investigators plan to make an announcement Monday on their findings.

Better yet: County arson investigators plan to report their findings Monday.

21

22

Watch for redundancies. The underlined words in the following sentences should be eliminated.

It was a hot, sultry afternoon.
("Sultry" means "hot.")

23

The refugees sought a safe haven.

("Haven" is a safe place.)

24

Police said Meyers was speeding when he rear-ended the van, which was going in the same direction.

(How else could he rear-end the van?)

25

The suspect quickly sprinted across the yard.
(Did you ever see a slow sprinter?)

The court will hear oral arguments Monday.

(It can't hear written arguments.)

26

Look for other words or phrases that are redundant or do not offer any new information in the context of the sentence. The underlined words in these sentences are not necessary and should be eliminated.

27

Jason said he had begun implementing some of the reforms recommended by the committee.

A police spokesman said five shootings occurred Saturday night. Three of the shootings were in Central Park.

28

Professor Thompson has lectured in 50 countries throughout the world.

29

The project is funded by a combination of state and federal grants.

30

A college graduate, she attended Cal State Fullerton, where she earned her bachelor's degree in journalism.

Better yet: She earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Cal State Fullerton

31

Do not summarize what someone says and then say the same thing in a direct quote.

32

The mayor said he would consider implementing some of the recommendations of the anti-corruption task force, but he added that he opposes appointing an independent counsel to investigate complaints.

"I would never support an independent counsel," he said. "It would infringe on the autonomy of the City Council."

33

condensed:

The mayor said he would consider implementing some of the recommendations of the anti-corruption task force, but he added that he opposes appointing an independent counsel to investigate complaints because "it would infringe on the autonomy of the City Council."

34

Be wary of sentences beginning with "there is/are." They weaken the writing and can be eliminated in almost every instance.

Original: There were more than 1,000 people at the rally.

Revised: More than 1,000 people attended the rally.

35

Original: The defense attorney said there is no new evidence.

Revised: The defense attorney said no new evidence exists.

36

Some other examples of tightening stories:

Original: Jones concluded by saying, "I support this project."

Revised: "I support this project," Jones concluded (or said).

37

Original: Daily responded by saying that taxes will not be raised...

Revised: Daily responded that taxes will not be raised...

38

Original: Adopt-a-Neighbor provides citizens of the community with...

Revised: Adopt-a-Neighbor provides the community with...

39

Original: Paxton requested the approval of the City Council for....

Revised: Paxton requested City Council approval for...

40

Original: The developer is seeking to build....

Revised: The developer wants to build...

Orange County Register

Services were scheduled for Friday in San Pedro with a private interment to be held at an undisclosed time and place.

Services were scheduled ~~for~~ Friday in San Pedro with a private interment ~~to be held at an undisclosed time and place~~ later.

42

Los Angeles Times, 10/11/95

40-word sentence**Warring Parties Again Delay Bosnia Cease-Fire**

[Bosnian] Government forces were reported late Tuesday to have taken the town [Mrkonjic Grad], strategic because it straddles road access from Sarajevo, the capital, to Bihac in the northwest, and Croatian television showed pictures purportedly of Croatian soldiers cruising the town in tanks.

43

Government forces were reported late Tuesday to have taken the town, and Croatian **television** showed pictures purportedly of Croatian soldiers cruising the town in tanks. Mrkonjic Grad is strategic strategic because ~~it straddles road access from Sarajevo, the capital, to Bihac in the northwest~~ **it's on the road between** Sarajevo, the capital, **and** Bihac in the northwest.

44

LA Times, June 23, 1999

second sentence is 50 words**'There Was Always Blood on the Floor,' Ex- Prisoner Says**

Once arrested, the prisoners were in for brutal treatment. People living near the Prizren Commune Prison, not far from the center of this historic city in southern Kosovo – a province of Serbia, the dominant Yugoslav republic – said they were kept awake at night by the agonizing screams of inmates who were being beaten.

45

Cut to 34 words

Once arrested, the prisoners were in for brutal treatment. People living near the Prizren Commune Prison in southern Kosovo said they were kept awake at night by the agonizing screams of inmates who were being beaten.

46

Wordiness exercise**Eliminate any wordiness in these sentences:**

It was a very unique program.

She tracked down the information.

47

Let us first begin by...

They found three dead bodies.

He is currently ...

48

Future plans include a new fountain.
We will join together ...
He offered a proposed plan to ...

The reporters were offered free gifts.
The rock dropped downward.
Past history tells us ...

50

During the winter months ...
It is now time to go.
The military is reverting back to its original strategy.

51

iPod technology is a new innovation.
He was strangled to death.
She was formerly employed by ...

52

During the course of the semester ...
The shooting occurred at the hour of 4 p.m.
We have no other alternative.

He climbed up the ladder.
They will construct a new building.
Predictions for the future include ...

Find words that will tighten these sentences:

He will return in the near future.

The meeting was canceled due to the fact that ...

55

The president did not pay any attention to the recommendation.

Police made an investigation of the allegations.