Eliminating Wordiness
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Wordiness

• Long sentences are not necessarily wordy, nor are short sentences necessarily concise.

• A sentence is wordy when it can be tightened (words eliminated) without loss of meaning.
Example:

He dropped out of school on account of the fact that it was necessary for him to help support his family.
Answer:

He dropped out of school to support his family.

*notice prepositional phrases eliminated*
Eliminate Redundancies

- Writers often repeat themselves thinking that expressions add emphasis to writing, but redundancies do the opposite.

- No need to say the same thing twice.
Examples

Redundant:
Daniel is now employed at a private rehabilitation center working as a registered physical therapist.

Concise:
Daniel is now employed at a private rehabilitation center as a registered physical therapist.

Daniel works at a private rehabilitation center as a registered physical therapist.

*see more examples on handout
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Avoid Unnecessary Repetition

- Repetitions seem awkward if they are not necessary.
- If a more concise version is possible, use it.

Our fifth patient, in room six, is a mentally ill patient.

Our fifth patient, in room six, is mentally ill.

*see more examples on handout
Cut Empty or Inflated Phrases

- Empty phrases can be deleted without loss of meaning.
  - *In my opinion, I think that, It seems that, One must admit...*

- Reduce inflated phrases to one word. (see handout)

  *practice exercises*
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Simplify Structure

- Simplify a sentence that is needlessly indirect.
- Look for opportunities to strengthen verbs
- In many cases, too many prepositions are an indication of wordiness.

The financial analyst claimed that because of volatile market conditions she could not make an estimate of the company's future profits.

The financial analyst claimed that because of the volatile market, she could not estimate the company's future profits.

*see examples on handout
Reduce clauses

- Reduce clauses to phrases.
- Reduce phrases to single words.
- Word groups functioning as modifiers can often be made more concise.

We took a trip to Monticello, which was the former home of Thomas Jefferson.

We took a trip to Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson.

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*see examples on handout*
Active Voice

• Use unless you have good reason not to (most times will not happen in academic/business writing).

• Emphasize actor (subject): start sentence with the subject.
  • The ball was caught by Hernando.
  • Hernando caught the ball.
Active Voice

- Replace -be verbs that result in dull or wordy sentences.
- Stay away from JARGON.
- Choose an appropriate level of formality.
- Avoid sexist language.
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References