

# Eliminating wordiness

Sentences are usually stronger and easier to understand when wordiness is eliminated. Try to identify which words add meaning to your writing and which just take up space. In the following, words in bold can be deleted without changing the meaning of the sentence.

## Waffle words

Weak or waffle words don't provide content and disrupt the flow of the sentence:

**Generally speaking**, writers can **basically** rely **in the main** on **certain** fundamental techniques to structure their text.

## Repeated meanings

Think about whether you are saying the same thing twice. Repeated meanings are an unnecessary form of wordiness. Paired words can also be a hazard:

The **end** result was shorter **in length** than we had hoped, but we plan to increase the text **in the future**. Our writing methods **and techniques** enabled us to achieve our aims **and objectives**.

## Non-essential information

Avoid superfluous prepositional phrases when the information is obvious, implied or irrelevant:

My story **for the competition** reached the magazine **through the post** 1 day late, so **when she scored it** the judge deducted 10 points **from my assessment**.

## Caginess

Lack of confidence in your argument can lead to wordiness (although qualifying can have its place in academic or report writing):

**It is possible that** this book is **for the most part** a potential bestseller.

## Outside references

Try cutting references to other people's thinking or reactions; if necessary, convey the source through a specific citation:

**Finally, it has been noted that** reading, **according to most measures**, is **usually thought of as** essential to modern life; **as we have seen**, this means that good reading classes are vital in early education.

## Phrases that can be replaced by single words

Keep an eye out for common wordy constructions in your writing and see if you can replace them with more concise words or phrases. Here are shorter substitutes for some common wordy phrases.

Wordy phrase	Shorter substitute
The reason for	because, since, why
For the reason that	
Due to the fact that	
Owing to the fact that	
In light of the fact that	
Considering the fact that	
On the grounds that	
Despite the fact that	although, even though
Regardless of the fact that	
In the event that	if
If it should happen that	
Under circumstances in which	
On the occasion of	when
In a situation in which	
Under circumstances in which	
As regards	about, regarding
In reference to	
With regard to	
Concerning the matter of	
It is crucial that	must, should
It is necessary that	
There is a need/necessity for	
It is important that	
Is able to	can
Is in a position to	
Has the opportunity to	
Has the capacity for	
Has the ability to	

Wordy phrase	Shorter substitute
It is possible that	may, might, can could
There is a chance that	
It could happen that	
The possibility exists for	
In order to	to
A number of	some, many
At the same time as	as, when
By the time	
Simultaneously with	
During the course of	during, while
In the process of	
In anticipation of	before
Prior to	
Subsequent to	after
Following on from	
Not different	similar
Not many	few
Not have	lack
Not include	omit
Not consider	ignore
Not the same	different
Not often	rarely
Not allow	prevent
Not admit	deny
Not accept	reject