



## Clear and Concise Style

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Clarity is a major concern during the revision process. To communicate with your reader as clearly and effectively as possible, you can make choices about the style of sentences and the words you select. This handout reviews some strategies that can help make your writing both concise and clear.

- 1. Combining Sentences:** When you revise your work, you may find sentences that can be combined together to reduce wordiness and redundancy. If you make the same point a couple times with two sentences, you can bring them together. Combining sentences can also provide stylistic variety, which can help to keep the reader interested in your writing. For example:

Original: *The Ohio State University was founded in 1870. It was a land grant institution and now has over 60,000 students and six campuses.*

Revision: *Founded as a land grant institution in 1870, The Ohio State University now has over 60,000 students and six campuses.*

- 2. Reducing Sentences:** When revising your work, you may also find that some sentences contain extra words—that is, words that are not serving a particular purpose and can be left out to make your sentences more precise. Reducing sentences by cutting out this extraneous information can decrease “wordiness” while still conveying important information.

Adjective Clauses: In the examples below, the adjective clauses are underlined.

Original: *The Titanic, which was a huge ocean liner, sank in 1912.*

Revision: *The Titanic, a huge ocean liner, sank in 1912.*

- 3. Using Strong Verbs:** Your writing will have more impact when you choose strong verbs that directly convey an action. “Be” and “have” are not strong verbs, and they tend to create wordy sentence structures. When you use strong verbs, you can write concise sentences.

Original: *This article has to do with the gradual shifting of tectonic plates over time.*

Revision: *This article explores the gradual shifting of tectonic plates over time.*

When you look for weak verbs to revise, also look for nouns derived from verbs with suffixes added (such as –ance, –ment, or –tion). To make the sentence concise and heighten impact, turn words back into verbs.

Original: *The ancient ruin had the appearance of having been flooded by the river.*

Revision: *It appeared that the river flooded the ancient ruin.*



- 4. Using Active Sentence Construction:** A sentence is passive (or in “passive voice”) when the subject of the sentence is the recipient of an action rather than the active agent (the person doing the action). Passive sentences can be confusing to a reader and also tend towards wordiness. Note: Science often uses passive voice.

Original: *Caesar was stabbed by Brutus.*

Revision: *Brutus stabbed Caesar.*

- 5. Diction:** Because words convey meaning, they affect the people reading or hearing them. As a writer, you should choose words carefully. The choices available to you are neither right nor wrong, but the words you choose to use can have a great impact on how your reader respond to what you say.

Original: *The pomegranate is filled with small, pustule-like seeds that explode in your mouth when you eat them.*

Revision: *The pomegranate is filled with small, balloon-like seeds that burst in your mouth when you eat them.*

- 6. Formality:** College writing typically requires formality.

Avoid slang and inappropriate colloquialisms (informal sayings). For example:

Original: *The garbage totally grosses me out.*

Revision: *The garbage is disgusting.*

Avoid loaded language. Biased or emotionally loaded language often makes readers wary and can decrease the effectiveness of your argument. Note the differences between the following sets of words:

<u>Unloaded</u>		<u>Loaded</u>
<i>mole</i>	vs.	<i>beauty mark</i>
<i>used car</i>	vs.	<i>previously owned vehicle</i>

Avoid sexist, racist, or otherwise insensitive language. For example:

*Only little girls should wear pink.*

Avoid clichés. For example:

*“A picture is worth a thousand words.”*  
*This job would “make my dreams come true.”*