The background features a dense, repeating pattern of the word "BLAH" in a handwritten, cursive font. The text is rendered in a light beige or tan color against a dark grey background. Overlaid on this are several semi-transparent, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, including triangles and polygons, which create a modern, layered effect.

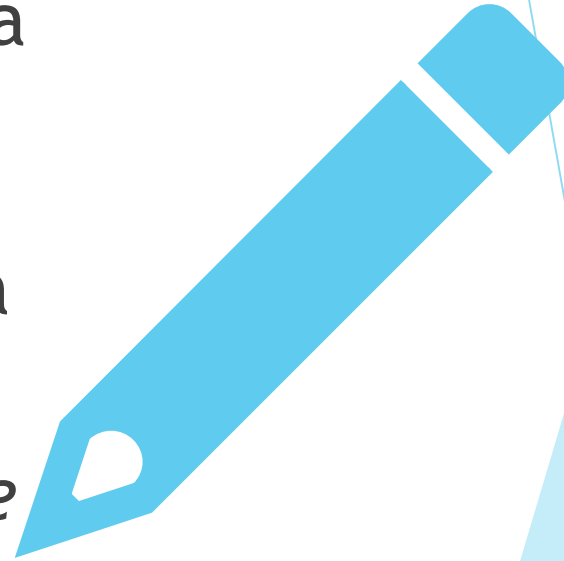
Eliminating Wordiness & Redundancy

Multilingual Student Support (MSS)

Camosun College

Writing Concisely

- ▶ “Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts.”
 - William Strunk Jr. in *Elements of Style*



Contents

1	Prune the redundant
2	Reduce clauses and phrases
3	Consider vocabulary choices
4	Avoid and reduce expletives
5	Identify and correct wordiness

Prune the Redundant





Prune the Redundant

Avoid saying the same thing twice.

Redundant phrases are bad habits just waiting to take control of your writing. Beware of things like the following:

- ▶ end result → result
- ▶ exactly the same → the same
- ▶ in the field of economics → in economics
- ▶ summarize briefly → summarize

Prune the Redundant

Redundancy can also occur when one idea or more is unnecessarily repeated in a sentence.

Original

In my personal opinion, we should refer back to last year's budget to see how we postponed that expenditure until a later time.

Can you find the repeated ideas in this sentence above?

Revised

In my **opinion**, we should **refer** to last year's budget to see how we **postponed** that expenditure.

Notes: Personal (if it's YOUR opinion, it must be personal); refer means go back, and postpone means do later!

Prune the Redundant

Pay attention to **synonyms** and words with similar meaning. If you can, reduce the sentence and delete the repetitive idea/word. **Try rewriting this as a more concise sentence:**

Original:

In terms of media **analysis**, my completed film studies and **analysis** courses equipped me with not only the cinematic language and skills for **analysis**, but also the methods for contextualizing films in specific time, location, history, culture, and political situations for **analysis**.

Revised:

My completed film studies and analysis courses equipped me with the appropriate cinematic language and skills to be able to contextualize films in specific time, location, history, culture and political situations.



Reduce Clauses and Phrases

Reduce Clauses and Phrases

Be alert for clauses or phrases that can be reduced to shorter constructions.

The "which" or "that" clause can often be shortened to a simple adjective.

Be careful, however, not to lose some needed emphasis by over-pruning; the word "which," which is sometimes necessary [as it is in this sentence], is not *evil*.

Reduce Adjective Clauses:

Original

- ▶ Smith College, **which was founded in 1871**, is the premier all-women's college in the United States.
- ▶ Citizens **who knew what was going on** voted him out of office.

Revised

- ▶ **Founded in 1871**, Smith College is the premier all-women's college in the United States.
- ▶ **Knowledgeable** citizens voted him out of office.

Reduce Phrases

Phrases can also be trimmed, sometimes to a single word.

Original:

- ▶ **Unburdened by a sense of responsibility**, Jason left his wife with forty-nine kids and a can of beans.

Revised:

- ▶ Jason **irresponsibly** left his wife with forty-nine kids and a can of beans.
(Or leave out the word altogether and let the act speak for itself.)



Vocabulary Choices



Vocabulary Choices: Word Families

Understanding **word families** can be helpful. Check for noun, verb, adjective or adverb forms. This is especially helpful when paraphrasing from outside sources.

You can create paraphrases by changing the word form in a sentence and reordering the words or using **synonyms**. This may change the length of a sentence too.

Original:

- ▶ We **analyzed** the data, and it showed children **react** when they have **too much** sugar.

react (verb)
reaction (noun)
reactive (adjective)

Revised:

The **analysis** of the data showed children's **reactions** to **excessive** sugar intake.

analyze (verb)
analysis (noun)
analytical (adjective)

Vocabulary Choices: Collocation

If you are uncertain if your word choice is correct or if you are using the appropriate preposition or pattern, you can check with one of many online collocation tools.

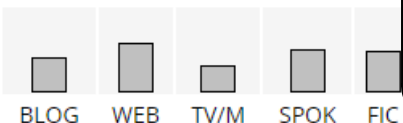
Collocation means common word combinations, such as "bright idea" (**not** "light idea") or strongly believe (**not** "strongly think").

- Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (see next two slides)
 - <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>
 - Note - You will need to create a free account.
 - Use the Browse+ option.
- Collocation dictionaries

Your word at the top

See in iWeb Collocates Clusters Topics Texts KWIC HELP

suspend (VERB)



Check definition and synonyms below

1. hang freely 2. cause to be held in suspension in a fluid, of particles, in chemistry 3. stop a process or a habit by imposing a freeze on it

D M O C G E

YouGlish PlayPhrase Yarn

Translate: choose language

The most common words found with the word

COLLOCATES (more)

NOUN game, license, disbelief, pay, operation, air, player, campaign

VERB hang, revoke, expel, announce, fine, terminate, violate, modify

ADJ mid-air, constitutional, driving, martial, liquid, diplomatic, disciplinary, mid

ADV temporarily, indefinitely, immediately, briefly, upside, officially, automatically, momentarily

See common collocations (clusters)

SYNONYMS

hang, dang

halt, hold,

postpone, s

N +SPEC +GENL

interrupt, check,

postpone, delay,

RELATED WORDS

suspension, suspended, suspenders

CLUSTERS (more)

suspend •	suspended for • suspended in • suspended from • suspended by • suspended on • suspended between • suspended over • suspended him
• suspend	has suspended • temporarily suspended • have suspended • will suspend • had suspended • by suspending • he suspended • can suspend
suspend ••	suspended from school • suspended without pay • suspended for two • suspended him for • suspended for three • suspended for one • suspended with pay • suspended in space
•• suspend	has been suspended • he was suspended • have been suspended • had been suspended • will be suspended • who was suspended • decision to suspend • have to suspend
suspend •••	suspended from the ceiling • suspended in the air • suspended for the first • suspended from school for • suspended in the water • suspended without pay for • suspended for a year • suspended for two weeks



BROWSE/RANDOM

WORD

CONTEXT

ACCOUNT

CONCORDANCE LINES (more)

1	ACAD: 2007: ArtBulletin	Fig. 17) . 69 One knee leaning			Christ turns his eyes
2	NEWS: 2018: Washington Post	Immediately afterward , Florida State President Joh			. The temporary ban
3	SPOK: 2015: PBS_Newshour	this morning . ALEXANDER-BORTNIKO# it will be re			e real causes of what
4	NEWS: 2008: AssocPress	employees . # Just this weekend , NASCAR sa			millions in their 2009
5	MAG: 2018: Engadget	" Stephenson adds as we walk past Hemingwa			ceiling . # " Absolutely ,
6	MAG: 2009: HarpersBazaar	appropriate 20 years ago . I 'll leave that thought			who thinks about
7	SPOK: 1991: PBS_Newshour	Well , first of all , all the governments voted to			any assistance to the government of Haiti . In the case of
8	WEB: 2012: foxnews.com	of homes and businesses lose power again , some transit services			suspended as nor'easter hits a week after Sandy # Tens of thousands of
9	ACAD: 2002: ABAJournal	of evasion . " A New Jersey justice wrote , in			suspending Bailey 's hac vice privilege for a year , that his
10	TV: 1995: Law & Order	that , he was certified for demolition work with explosives .			Suspended because of a drinking problem . I do n't believe this.
11	NEWS: 2003: Chicago	about the money ? " # Clarett -- who has been			suspended by Ohio State
12	FIC: 2000: Mov:ExecutiveDecisio...	out of reach . TOD 'S FACE FALL INTO FRAME ,			suspended by the cord , propped against the back wall
13	WEB: 2012: washingtonpost.com	's Sexism Must Stop . " Shuster later apologized and was			suspended by the network . # The big prize today is Washington and
14	NEWS: 2000: NYTimes	National Security Council and last week I broke off --			suspended campaigning for two days or parts of two days to go back
15	NEWS: 2017: Chicago Sun-Times	. # Chicago Police followed IPRA 's recommendation and			suspended Deering -- who briefly served in the bike unit and is now
16	NEWS: 1993: WashPost	are not enough , the authorities should have a plan to			suspend democratic procedures for a time , " wrote pro-reform analyst
17	SPOK: 2010: NPR_TellMore	happy to report , frankly , that administration immediately did			suspend deportations of Haitian refugees , Haitian citizens that are in
18	WEB: 2012: blogs.suntimes.com	question . # Why is it so easy for you to			suspend disbelief for some films and not for others ? # In the
19	WEB: 2012: blogs.suntimes.com	But I feel betrayed , Roger . I was asked to			suspend disbelief several tod many times . And it was n't just the
20	BLOG: 2012: theepochtimes.com	, where he majored in planning statistics . His schooling was			suspended during the cultural Revolution , though he later completed his
21	SPOK: 1995: ABC_Nightline	you know it . Sec . BRUCE BABBITT : -that we			suspend environmental laws For example , Senator Stevens is
22	NEWS: 2008: NYTimes	's and F 's , and last semester , he was			suspended five times mostly for fighting . When the school year ended
23	SPOK: 2015: PBS_Newshour	this was an act of terror , but now they 're			suspending flights MARGARET-WARNER# Well , Judy , Putin is one of the
24	WEB: 2012: huffingtonpost.com	the gas which is why refineries mattered should also have been			suspended for 4 weeks This was an emergency and they are responsible
25	BLOG: 2012: ...ht.blogs.nytimes...	Gallup poll , for example , just because it has been			suspended for a couple of days .) # We do n't usually
26	FIC: 1997: FantasySciFi	Zip 's college . His newsclod had said the match was			suspended for a day at the request of the Lignorelli 's handlers .
27	WEB: 2012: ftc.gov	. # Forbearance : Your mortgage payments are reduced or			suspended for a period you and your servicer agree to . At the
28	MAG: 1997: Atlantic	practice of traditional public health has been to a great degree			suspended for acquired immune deficiency syndrome and for human
29	BLOG: 2012: audio.wgr550.com	in Ed Reed has been suspended . Baltimore safety Ed --			suspended for one team for repeated violations . Of rules prohibiting its
30	NEWS: 2002: WashPost	, and in the winter of ' 99 , Howard was			suspended for two weeks for disciplinary reasons . Three times this season

See the word in context from a range of texts. Look for patterns. Compare with your work.

by someone
something
A time

Vocabulary Choices: Omit Wordy Phrases

Be on the lookout for important sounding phrases that **add nothing** to the meaning of a sentence. Such phrases may alert the reader that the writer is exaggerating (or just trying to get a word count!).

▶ **Ex. all things considered**

All things considered, Connecticut's woodlands are in better shape now than ever before.

~~All things considered~~, Connecticut's woodlands are in better shape now than before.

Note: These types of phrases are more acceptable in speaking, but not in vigorous, concise writing!

Vocabulary choices: Avoid Intensifiers

Avoid using adverbs such as *really*, *very*, *quite*, *extremely*, *severely*, *virtually*, *truly*, *basically*, *fundamentally*, & *actually* when they are not necessary. It is probably enough to say that the salary increase is *inadequate*.

Does saying that a salary is "*severely* inadequate" introduce anything more than an exaggerated tone?

These words shouldn't be removed from your vocabulary but use them sparingly in writing.

Vocabulary choices: Eliminate Clichés

A cliché is an expression that was probably, once upon a time, an original and brilliant way of saying something:

- ▶ *"She fell head over heels in love" or "She's cool as a cucumber."*

Such expressions can cause confusion with international audiences. Avoid a mix of clichés or idioms.

- ▶ A mayor of Austin, Texas, once announced, "I wanted all my ducks in a row, so if we did get into a posture, we could pretty much slam-dunk this thing and put it to bed."



Vocabulary choices: Watch Euphemisms

Be careful with euphemisms in your writing. These can be easily confused.

E.g.,

- "Passed away" instead of "died"
 - "Let go" instead of "fired"
 - "Put down" instead of "euthanized"
- ▶ They have a place when being polite, but don't overuse!

See: <https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-euphemism.html>



Avoid and Reduce Expletives

Avoid Expletive Constructions

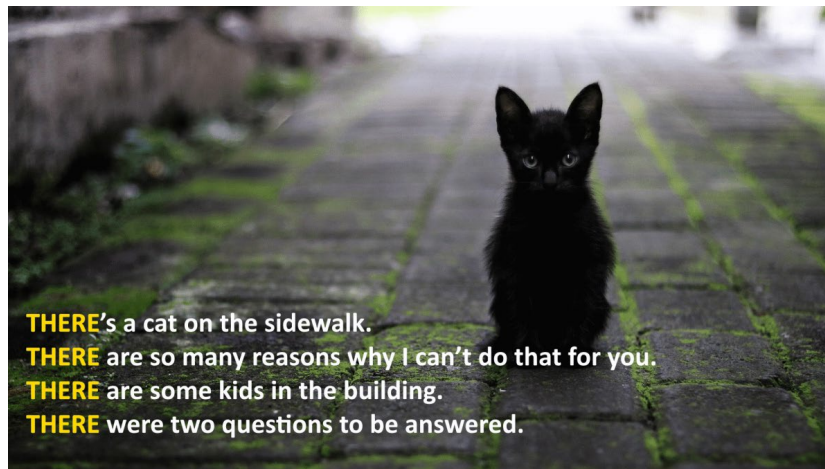
An *expletive construction* is a common device that often robs a sentence of energy before it gets a chance to do its work. Expletive constructions begin with **there is/are** or **it is**.

Original:

- ▶ **There are** twenty-five students **who** have already expressed a desire to attend the program next summer. **It is** they and their parents **who** stand to gain the most by the government grant.

Revised:

- ▶ **Twenty-five students** have already expressed a desire to attend the program next summer. **They and their parents** stand to gain the most by the government grant.



Reduce Expletives

Original:

- ▶ **There are** some business people **who** believe the human race is not instinctively aggressive, but instinctively cooperative.

Revised:

- ▶ **Some business people** believe the human race is not instinctively aggressive, but instinctively cooperative.

Reduce Expletives

Original:

- ▶ **This is** an article *which* shows how Apple used market research to appeal to its clients.

Revised:

- ▶ This article shows how Apple used market research to appeal to its clients.

Also avoid overusing BE verb.

Original:

- ▶ The portrait **is** a distortion of Franklin Roosevelt's features.

Revised:

- ▶ The portrait **distorts** Franklin Roosevelt's features.

Use a more precise VERB instead where possible.

Reduce Expletives

ONLY USE *It is...there are* as when the subject (agent/doer) of the action is NOT important and you want to focus on the IDEA or receiver of the action.

Passive voice also accomplishes this.

E.g.,

It has also **been shown** that...

There are innumerable examples which may...

It is likely that... etc.

These phrases are often used in academic writing and used for generalizations.

Identify and Correct Wordiness



Identify the **wordy phrases** in the following FIVE examples:

Original:

1. Martoff (2007) points out that they think that by not having strangers, the rate of criminal activity can be reduced.

Revised:

- ▶ Martoff (2007) points out that **disallowing** strangers can reduce the rate of criminal activity.

Original:

2. The thing that they don't consider is the creativity of the most diverse workplaces.

Revised:

- ▶ **The creativity** of the most diverse workplaces **is** not always **considered**.
- ▶ Or: They don't consider the creativity of the most diverse workplaces. (As long as "they" is a direct referent pronoun in the context.)

**Identify and
Correct
Wordiness**

Original:

3. Lastly, he indicates that the statistics that have been conducted in the U.S. **suggests** that the criminal activity rate is the same in gated communities and non-gated communities.

Revised:

- ▶ Lastly, statistics indicate that **the rate of crime** in the U.S. **may** be the same for gated and non-gated communities.

Original:

4. As data show, the area which is in gated communities does not have less criminal activity than other non-gated communities.

Revised:

- ▶ As data show, gated communities do not have less criminal activity than other non-gated communities.

Identify and Correct Wordiness

Original:

5. However, supporters of this point of view do not take into account the fact that the majority of people who are called strangers do not have any criminal intentions.

Revised:

- ▶ However, supporters **do not consider** that the majority of strangers **have no** criminal intentions.
- ▶ OR: However, supporters **do not believe in the criminal intentions of** most strangers.

Identify and
Correct
Wordiness

Conclusion

To achieve concise writing, remember to...

Edit for clarity

Edit for
redundancy

Edit for word
choice in context

Edit wordiness



Thank you!

Please let us know your thoughts
on this presentation!

Short survey:

<https://forms.office.com/r/QwKQiBB0uz>



Additional Resources

- ▶ COCA for accuracy and patterns (collocations):
 - <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>
- ▶ Camosun Library Student Learning Success Guides
 - https://camosun.libguides.com/Student_learning_success_guides
- ▶ Camosun Writing Centre and Learning Skills
 - <https://camosun.ca/services/academic-supports/help-centres/writing-centre-learning-skills>
- ▶ Your school's Multilingual Support Specialist (MSS)
 - <http://camosunmss.opened.ca>



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