What is Concise Writing, and Why Does it Matter?

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INSPIRATION

Have you ever lost interest while reading something long-winded and rambling? You aren't alone.

Concise writing means using the fewest words possible to convey an idea clearly. There's a reason why writing concisely is recommended so often—it's excellent advice.

Reading sprawling sentences can feel overwhelming, confusing, or boring. It can confuse readers by making it harder for them to quickly identify the main point of what you're trying to communicate. After all, they have to sift through the extra verbiage and hunt for the key points of your message. Making readers do unnecessary work can make them grumpy, and grumpy readers are less receptive to what you have to say.

Whether you're sending a text message, writing an email, or updating your resume, wordy writing dilutes the impact of your message. Concise writing, instead, helps grab and hold your reader's attention. It's also likely to be more memorable and make a lasting impact on your reader.

But brevity doesn't come naturally to everyone, and concise writing takes effort. Here are some tips to help you identify the extra words weighing down your writing and tighten up unwieldy sentences.

Eliminate Redundant Words

Cutting redundant words like tautologies can help create stronger, more direct sentences. Tautologies are expressions or phrases that repeat the same information. They take up unnecessary space and can distract your reader. Getting rid of them simplifies sentences and gets your point across faster.

Example
Wordy: In my opinion, I think that's a problem.
Concise: In my opinion, that's a problem.

Example
Wordy: The course had several necessary requirements.
Concise: The course had several requirements.

Strengthen Weak Adjectives

Using strong, descriptive adjectives helps trim down sentence length. Look for places where you've used two words to describe something when one would do. Strengthening your vocabulary can help you ensure that you're using the best word for the situation and that all of your words deserve to be in your sentence. Plus, strong adjectives make your writing more vibrant!

Example
Wordy: Brunch was very good.
Concise: Brunch was superb.

Example
Wordy: She struggled to sit through his really boring speech.
Concise: She struggled to sit through his tedious speech.

Remove Vague Nouns

Do all of your nouns actually move your point forward? If not, it may be time to say goodbye. Eliminating these unnecessary words will help make your writing more direct and clear.

Example
Wordy: Career growth was an important factor in why I decided to join.
Concise: I joined to advance my career.

Example
Wordy: I'm interested in the areas of history and biology.
Concise: I'm interested in history and biology.

Eliminate Filler Words

Filler words are words that add no meaning or value to a sentence and simply "fill" the space. They can be easily removed or replaced, but often inadvertently creep up in writing since we're so used to using them in our speech.

Example
Wordy: For all intents and purposes, this project will be outsourced.
Concise: This project will be outsourced.

Example
Wordy: Needless to say, I think we should get grilled cheese.
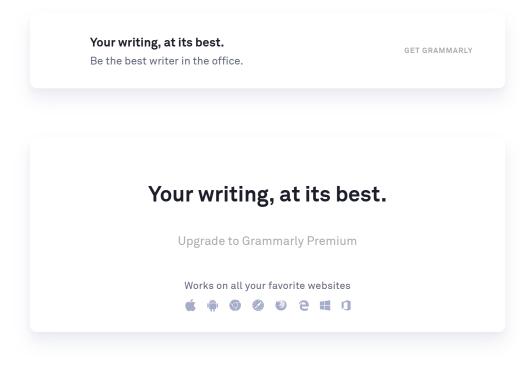
Concise: We should get grilled cheese.

Construct Active Sentences

Some sentence structures tend to be wordier than others. Although the passive voice isn't incorrect and is completely fine to use in moderation, it's often a weaker type of sentence construction. If you find yourself trending towards using the passive voice because you think it sounds a bit fancier or softens something unpleasant, remember that active voice sets a stronger and more direct tone. Keep most of your sentences in active voice—you'll find that they also tend to be more concise.

Example   **Wordy:** If this was something caused on our end, it might be something to be aware of.

                       Concise: We should be aware of this in case something on our end caused it.

Example   **Wordy:** The error message was written by robots.

                       Concise: Robots wrote the error message.

It's easy to fill up sentences with extra words, especially when you're excited about what you have to say. Concise writing takes effort and can be tricky, but every word needs to earn its place in your writing.

And the good news is that you don't have to do it alone. Did you know that Grammarly offers checks to identify tautologies, enhance your vocabulary, eliminate unnecessary phrases, and flag passive voice?

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