

A Beginner's Guide to Concise Writing



At its core, the keys to concise writing are **word choice**, **sentence structure**, and **organization**. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to improve your concision:

1 Can I write this sentence in fewer words?

Avoid using unnecessary phrases and filler words.

Wordy: The bridge is unstable **due to the fact that** it was constructed with inferior material.

Concise: The bridge is unstable **because** it was constructed with inferior material.

2 Can I simplify this?

Writing about field-specific topics introduces jargon that can often be simplified into plain(er) language.

Wordy: The patient was using **positive-pressure ventilatory support**.

Concise: A patient was using **a ventilator**.

Sometimes you can re-arrange and eliminate words or phrases in your writing without disrupting or diluting meaning.

Wordy: **It is** challenging **to read** Shakespeare.

Concise: **Reading** Shakespeare **is** challenging.

3 Have I repeated myself?

At times, repetition can be a useful tool for emphasis, but when used unnecessarily it takes up space and makes content boring for readers.

Wordy: Subjects with **little technical training** tend to perform poorly **due to their lack of technical experience**.

Concise: Some subjects' **lack of technical experience** resulted in poor performance.

4 Is it appropriate to use the active voice?

When possible and appropriate, the active voice should be used rather than the passive voice. Active voice emphasizes the performer of the action, and the performer holds the subject position in the sentence. If you're unsure of what active and passive voice are, you can learn about them [here](#) on our website.

Wordy: **It is believed by the candidate** that all reparations must **be listed** on the budget **by Parliament**.

Concise: **The candidate believes** that **Parliament must list** all reparations on the budget.



Important note: Is my meaning clear to my readers?

Remember, length is only one aspect of concision. If you've cut down your writing but you've lost significant clarity and meaning, then you've lost concision as well.

Unclear: The different aspects of the painting reflect change.

Clear: The use of abstraction in the painting reflects a shift in aesthetic movements.



Keeping these questions in mind when revising can help you determine if you are writing concisely. But this is just a short introduction! For a more in-depth understanding of concise writing, you can check out the WCC's resource entry on [writing concisely](#).

Need help with other things like assignments, essays or brainstorming? Check out the Writing and Communication Centre website, or book a virtual one-on-one appointment. We're here to help!