

Writing Concisely: Deleting or Replacing Unnecessary Information

When we write concisely, we write clearly. Compare the sentences below:

1. In my opinion, it is important that all college students participate in the electoral process by casting their vote.
2. All college students should vote.

The sentences above convey the same message, but Sentence 2 does it in a short and clear fashion. Therefore, Sentence 2 is **concise**, whereas Sentence 1 is **wordy**. To write concise sentences, delete or replace unnecessary or redundant words.

1. **“Meaningless” words:** Eliminate common words that add little meaning or relevance to sentences. Examples include *kind of, sort of, type of, actually, really, various, virtually, basically, generally, practically, specific, particular, truly, clearly, obviously, and undoubtedly*.
 - a. *Actually, Mary kind of* glanced at Bob when she realized they had *basically* lost the battle.
 - b. Mary glanced at Bob when she realized they had lost the battle.
2. **Redundant pairs:** Do not combine pairs of words when the meaning of one implies the other. E.g.: *final outcome, past history, free gift, sudden crisis, each individual, future plans, end result, true facts, actual truth, first and foremost*.
 - a. The *future plan* Congress will propose to *completely overhaul* the healthcare system could *negatively frustrate* constituents.
 - b. The plan Congress will propose to overhaul the healthcare system could frustrate constituents.

Practice

Rewrite the following sentences eliminating meaningless or redundant words. You may have to modify the sentence structure.

- i. When I asked her about the new job, she sort of looked at me with anger and basically did not reply.

- ii. Now that Bob has truly been fired, appealing to the CEO is kind of useless.

- iii. Each individual will receive a free gift during the ceremony.

- iv. Committee members first began by discussing the new marketing plan; then they presented the true facts about foreign imports from Belgium.

- v. Anthropologists really believe these old fossils are absolutely crucial to uncovering our past history.

Suggested answers: *i.* When I asked her about the new job, she looked at me with anger and did not reply. *ii.* Now that Bob has been fired, appealing to the CEO is useless. *iii.* Each participant will receive a gift during the ceremony. *iv.* Committee members first discussed the new marketing plan; then they presented the facts about imports from Belgium. *v.* Anthropologists believe these fossils are crucial to uncovering our history.