

## Eliminating Wordiness

Although adding words helps fill pages, information that doesn't advance the paper cheapens the quality of the piece. Keeping your paper concise strengthens its clarity and gives it a smooth flow.

Here are some tips to help keep your writing to the point:

### 1. Weak words

The written equivalent of "um." Filler words don't provide content, and they disrupt the flow of the sentence.

EX: *Generally speaking*, students can *basically* use anything to do research.  
REVISION: Students can use anything to do research.

Examples: *Kind of, actually, really, practically, generally, etc.*

### 2. Repeated meanings and unneeded synonyms

Paired words may be redundant.

EX: If her account is *true* and *accurate*, he was the one who stole it.  
REVISION: If her account is *true*, he was the one who stole it.

Examples: *each & every, true & accurate, first & foremost, terrible tragedy, controversial issue, true facts, etc.*

### 3. Phrases that can be replaced by single words

If you can think of one word to replace several, use it.

EX: If I ever *come back* to visit, we can *think about* it.  
REVISION: If I ever return to visit, we can consider it.

### 4. Monologue phrases

Injecting notes about structure, spurring audience reaction, or clarifying intent may interfere with your main point.

EX: *As we have seen*, the statistics contribute to *what some may call* an issue.  
REVISION: The statistics contribute to the issue.

### 5. Caginess

Lack of confidence in your writing can also lead to wordiness.

EX: *It is possible* this may be true.  
REVISION: This may be true.

Examples: *It seems like, it is possible that, etc.*

## 6. Nonessential information

If the information about *who*, *when*, and *where*, does not advance your point, it is unnecessary.

EX: When I took the class *in May of last year*, I received an A.  
REVISION: When I took the class, I received an A.

## 7. Change negatives to affirmatives

When possible, replace the negative phrase with one word. Think of antonyms for the word in the sentence. Your sentence will be much clearer.

EX: There are *not many* examples that are interesting.  
REVISION: There are *few* examples that are interesting.

Examples: *not many*=few, *not stop*=continue, *not notice*=overlook, *not include*=omit, *not different*=similar, *not the same*=different, *not allow*=prevent, *etc.*

## 8. Avoid beginning sentences with “it is,” “there is,” and “there are”

Avoid these phrases unless you are introducing a new topic in your sentence or emphasizing the idea following these phrases.

Note this improvement of the previous example:

EX: *There are* few examples that are interesting.  
REVISION: Few examples are interesting.

## 9. Avoid unnecessary or overuse of “be” verbs (am, is, are, was, were).

“Be” verbs are common but not always necessary. Delete them when possible to create a stronger and more direct sentence.

EX: The examples *are* interesting to me.  
REVISION: The examples interest me.