

## Wordiness

Readers do not appreciate the value of a multiplicity of words when those words do not contribute to the meaning of the text. Readers value economy.

### Solutions

Remove unnecessary subordinate clauses.

- A clause which is unnecessary can often be reduced to a descriptor → An unnecessary clause can be reduced to a descriptor.
- The book which is entitled Eats Shoots and Leaves is about punctuation → The book Eats Shoots and Leaves is about punctuation, or Eats Shoots and Leaves is about punctuation.

Remove “to be” constructions at the beginning of sentences.

- There is a tendency among wordy writers to start sentences with “there is.” → Wordy writers tend to start sentences with “there is.”
- It is true that some scholars of linguistics argue for the value of the end-weighted sentence which begins with a “to be” construction. → Some scholars of linguistics argue for the value of the end-weighted sentence beginning with a “to be” construction. [also an unnecessary subordinate clause]

Combine short sentences that belong together (and avoid choppiness too).

- Wordiness is not wrong. It is, however, often irritating. Writers shouldn’t waste their readers’ time with unnecessary verbiage. They shouldn’t waste their ink, either. (24 words)  
→ Writers shouldn’t waste their ink or their readers’ time with unnecessary verbiage, which is irritating though not wrong. (18 words)

Avoid roundabout expressions (circumlocutions); that is, be direct.

- She has shuffled off this mortal coil → She died.
- He prefers a writing implement with a supply of liquid ink → He prefers a fountain pen.

Remove unnecessary modifiers and intensifiers.

- Careful editing ~~definitely~~ makes a ~~huge~~ difference.
- However, don’t remove necessary logical qualifiers!
- Good writers are almost always keen readers.

Choose active over passive constructions if appropriate (see handout).

Cut redundancies (see handout).

Remove inappropriate nominalizations (see handout).