

Eliminating Words: Changing Wordy to Concise

Try to reduce sentence length by eliminating unnecessary words in the following situations.

A. Eliminate words that explain the obvious or provide excessive detail. Consider readers while drafting and revising writing. Delete or reword passages that explain or describe details that would be obvious to readers.

1. The current focus of the medical profession is disease prevention. (10 words)

The focus of the medical profession is preventing disease.

2. I received your inquiry that you wrote about your test results yesterday, and I read it thoroughly. Yes, we do have.... (21 words)

Yes, your test results are ready. (6 words)

3. Imagine a mental picture of someone engaged in the intellectual activity of trying to learn what the steps are for how to use their legs for transportation. (27 words)

Image a person learning how to walk. (7 words)

B. Eliminate unnecessary determiners and modifiers. Try not to clog up your sentences with extra words or phrases that modify the meaning of a noun but don't add to the meaning of the sentence.

1. Any particular type of flu vaccine is fine with me. (10 words)

Any flu vaccine is fine with me. (7 words)

2. Finishing all of this charting by the end of my shift is an impossibility without some kind of extra help. (20 words)

Finishing this charting by the end of my shift is impossible without help. (13 words)

C. Omit repetitive wording. Watch for phrases that repeat words with similar meanings. Words that don't build on the content of the sentence or paragraph aren't necessary.

1. The office manager considered the retractable needles an unneeded luxury. (10 words)

The office manager considered the retractable needles unnecessary. (8 words)

2. Our medical clinic currently employs five nurses. These nurses do an excellent job Monday through Thursday but cannot keep up with the rush on Friday and Saturday. (27 words)

Our medical clinic's five nurses cannot keep up with the rush on Friday and Saturday. (15 words)

D. Omit redundant categories. Specific words imply their general categories, so we usually don't have to state both. We know that a period is a segment of time, pink is a color, and shiny is an appearance. So, the general category term can be dropped, leaving just the descriptive word.

1. During that time period, many patients experienced small lesions that were pink in color and shiny in appearance. (18 words)

During that time, many patients experienced small, pink, shiny lesions. (10 words)

2. The microscope revealed a group of organisms that were round in shape and peculiar in nature. (16 words)

The microscope revealed a group of round and peculiar organisms. (10 words)