



Uni-edit English Writing Tip 009

Reducing wordiness

Difficulty: Medium

Quick quiz: There are 21 words in the sentence below. Can you reduce it by 4 words while retaining the same meaning?

"There are several reports that suggest a slight reduction in sugar intake could possibly extend one's lifespan by about 1-3 years."

Because this sentence is wordy, yes, you can reduce the number of words.

Sentences that are “wordy” use too many words to make their point. Making your point using few words—i.e. writing concisely—is considered good style in all forms of English writing. In addition, writing concisely makes it easy to meet word counts, especially in the Abstract, where space is usually limited.

Let's look at three ways to reduce wordiness.

Revise: “There is/are [noun] that [verb]...”

Wordy: **There are several studies that suggest** a positive association between more moderate exercise in childhood and bone density.

Concise: **Several studies suggest** a positive association between more moderate exercise in childhood and bone density.

Explanation: The phrases are exactly equivalent in meaning, but the lower version uses three fewer words!

Remove: Conceptually redundant words

Wordy: **This effect could possibly be** explained by alternations in biomechanical forces present in the device.

Concise: **This effect could be** explained by alternations in biomechanical forces present in the device.

Explanation: The idea of ‘possibility’ is duplicated in ‘could’ and ‘possibly’, so ‘possibly’ can be deleted.

Wordy: **The nanotubes had an inner diameter of about 60-70 nm.**

Concise: **The nanotubes had an inner diameter of 60-70 nm.**

Explanation: The idea of “about” is implied by including a range of numbers.

Wordy: **The melting point is very critical to consider for welding materials.**

Concise: **The melting point is critical to consider for welding materials.**

Explanation: The idea of ‘very; extremely’ is implied by the word ‘critical’.

Revise: “Due to the fact that”, “Based on the fact that”, “In light of the fact that”, etc.

These words can almost always be replaced with “because” for a simpler, easier-to-read sentence.

Wordy: **WordNet has been successful based on the fact that it is available on-line, it is free of charge, and it is a dictionary based on concepts: i.e., it provides much more than just an alphabetic list of words.**

Concise: **WordNet has been successful because it is available on-line, it is free of charge, and it is a dictionary based on concepts: i.e., it provides much more than just an alphabetic list of words.**

Wordy: **However, due to the fact that drug conjugates are utilized as the capture and detection molecules, this type of assay is susceptible to drug and target interference.**

Concise: **However, since drug conjugates are utilized as the capture and detection molecules, this type of assay is susceptible to drug and target interference.**

Now you try: Can you make the wordy sentence at the start of the tip more concise? Select the text below with your mouse to uncover the answer.

“Several reports suggest that a slight reduction in sugar intake could extend one’s lifespan by 1-3 years.”