CONCISENESS

Avoiding Wordiness

In technical writing, conciseness (i.e., the ability to write without irrelevant words, clauses, and phrases) is desirable. The goal of any communicative act is to convey information clearly, and a concise, simple sentence often does better at conveying meaning than a wordy, convoluted sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid these phrases and words because they contribute to wordiness:</th>
<th>Replace wordy phrases and words with the following:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In order to</td>
<td>To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very</td>
<td>Just avoid using the word very; it is often a useless intensifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is absolutely no doubt</td>
<td>Undoubtedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to the fact that</td>
<td>Because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In connection with</td>
<td>by or with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through the use of</td>
<td>by or with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At this point in time</td>
<td>currently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has the capacity to</td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A big majority</td>
<td>most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the event that</td>
<td>if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The state of Colorado (or any other state)</td>
<td>Just use the state's name; your reader will know that Colorado is a state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The year of 2019 (or any other year)</td>
<td>Just write the year; your reader will know that 2019, for example, is a year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conciseness Examples

The following contains wordy sentences and revised, concise versions of those sentences. Make note of what was eliminated. Also note how the writer will often break long, wordy sentences into two or more smaller, more manageable sentences because a sentence should be unified around one idea. If too many ideas are in one sentence, we risk confusing our readers. In technical writing, we must never confuse our readers; we should strive for clarity. Wordiness further reduces our academic tone (see handout on tone).

**Wordy Sentence 1:**

There is absolutely no doubt that a very large majority of petroleum is in Saudi Arabia, but notwithstanding this fact, Venezuela can produce well over 300,000 barrels of oil.

**Concise Version 1:**

Undoubtedly, Saudi Arabia has most of the world’s oil. However, Venezuela can produce well over 300,000 barrels of oil.

**Explanation 1:**

- The first sentence uses the wordy expression there is absolutely no doubt, and the concise version uses the simple undoubtedly
- The word very adds nothing to the meaning of this sentence and can be eliminated summarily
- Furthermore, most should be used instead of large majority
- Because the wordy sentence is about both Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, a concise version can be written that gives each country its own sentence. Concise writers tackle only one topic per sentence; doing more will create confusing sentences

**Wordy Sentence 2:**

Due to the fact that ionic liquids, which are both liquid and solid, are very unique, they can be used in the event of an energy shortage as they can be used in storing energy.

**Concise Version 2:**

Ionic liquids are both liquid and solid. Because they are unique, they can be used if there ever exists an energy shortage. They can store energy.
Conciseness Examples Continued

Explanation 2:
- Again, very adds nothing to the sentence and can be cut
- Due to the fact that is wordy and can always be replaced with because
- Also, if is better than in the event of
- Instead of explaining what makes ionic liquids unique in a non-essential clause, the concise version provides a single, simple sentence that explains what makes these liquids unique
- Finally, in the concise version, that fact that ionic liquids can store energy gets its own sentence

Wordy Sentence 3:
A large majority of drone motors are rated in kilovolts, which, needless to say, have the capacity to burn through a battery incredibly quickly.

Concise Version 3:
Most drone motors are rated in kilovolts. These motors can burn through a battery quickly.

Explanation 3:
- A large majority should be replaced with most
- Needless to say adds nothing to the sentence and can thus be removed
- The word can is clearer than have the capacity
- The word incredibly is similar to very and can be eliminated
- The concise version provides two simple sentences: one about drones relying on kilovolts and one about a motor’s battery.