

17.1 Controlling Wordiness and Writing Concisely

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize and eliminate repetitive ideas.
2. Recognize and remove unneeded repeated words.
3. Recognize unneeded words and revise sentences to be more concise.

It is easy to let your sentences become cluttered with words that do not add value to what you are trying to say. You can manage cluttered sentences by eliminating repetitive ideas, removing repeated words, and rewording to eliminate unneeded words.

Eliminating Repetitive Ideas

Unless you are providing definitions on purpose, stating one idea in two ways within a single sentence is redundant and not necessary. Read each example and think about how you could revise the sentence to remove repetitive phrasing that adds wordiness. Then study the suggested revision below each example.

Examples

Original: Use a **very heavy skillet made of cast iron** to bake an extra juicy meatloaf.

Revision: Use a cast iron skillet to bake a very juicy meatloaf.

Original: Joe thought **to himself**, “I think I’ll make caramelized grilled salmon tonight.”

Revision: Joe thought, “I think I’ll make caramelized grilled salmon tonight.”

Removing Repeated Words

As a general rule, you should try not to repeat a word within a sentence. Sometimes you simply need to

choose a different word. But often you can actually remove repeated words. Read this example and think about how you could revise the sentence to remove a repeated word that adds wordiness. Then check out the revision below the sentence.

Example

Original: The student who won the cooking contest is a very talented and ambitious **student**.

Revision: The student who won the cooking contest is very talented and ambitious.

Rewording to Eliminate Unneeded Words

If a sentence has words that are not necessary to carry the meaning, those words are unneeded and can be removed to reduce wordiness. Read each example and think about how you could revise the sentence to remove phrasing that adds wordiness. Then check out the suggested revisions to each sentence.

Examples

Original: Andy **has the ability to make** the most fabulous twice-baked potatoes.

Revision: Andy makes the most fabulous twice-baked potatoes.

Original: For his **part in the** cooking class group project, Malik **was responsible for making** the mustard reduction sauce.

Revision: Malik made the mustard reduction sauce for his cooking class group project.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- State ideas only once within a single sentence, as opposed to repeating a key idea in an attempt to clarify.
- Avoid unnecessarily repeating words within a sentence.

- Write concisely by eliminating unneeded words.

EXERCISE

1. Rewrite the following sentences by eliminating unneeded words.
 - I was late because of the fact that I could not leave the house until such time as my mother was ready to go.
 - I used a pair of hot pads to remove the hot dishes from the oven.
 - The bus arrived at 7:40 a.m., I got on the bus at 7:41 a.m., and I was getting off the bus by 7:49 a.m.
 - The surface of the clean glass sparkled.