
Brevity Rules

1.) **Eliminate redundancies.** When a more concise version is possible, choose it.

Example:

Avoid: The best teacher helps a **student** become a better **student** both academically and emotionally.

Better: The best teacher helps a student become better academically and emotionally.

2.) **Cut empty or inflated phrases** (deadwood) such as: *In my opinion, I think that, it seems that, one must admit that...*

Example:

Avoid: In my opinion, our current immigration policy is misguided.

Better: Our current immigration policy is misguided.

3.) **Simplify the sentence.** If the structure of a sentence is needlessly indirect, try to simplify it. Look for opportunities to strengthen the verb.

Example:

Avoid: The financial analyst claimed that because of volatile market conditions, she could not make an estimate of the company's future profits.

Better: Because of volatile market conditions, the financial analyst cannot estimate the company's future profits.

There is and **there are** (*there was* and *there were*) can also generate excess words.

Example:

Avoid: There were many factors that influenced his decision to be a priest.

Better: Many factors influenced his decision to be a priest

Condense clauses beginning **with which, that,** or **who** into fewer words.

Example:

Avoid: The office which was at the heart of the city had the most clients.

Better: The office at the heart of the city had the most clients.

Avoid: Shoppers who are looking for bargains often patronize outlets.

Better: Shoppers looking for bargains often patronize outlets.

4.) **Avoid circumlocution.** Circumlocution is the roundabout way to say something.

Example:

Avoid: The experience that changed Tommy most would have to be the hunting trip.

Better: The experience that changed Tommy most was the hunting trip.

Avoid: The curriculum was of a unique nature.

Better: The curriculum was unique.

5.) **Eliminate trite language.**

Example:

Avoid: Enclosed please find your new CD-ROM player.

Better: Your CD-ROM player is enclosed.

Avoid: Thanking you for your order, I remain.

Sincerely yours,

Better: Thank you for your order.

Sincerely yours,

Source:

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