

Here are some ideas about avoiding wordiness.

1. Avoid "there is/are/was/were" phrases.

Wrong: There are several advantages to genetic screening. (7 words)

Better: Genetic screening presents several advantages. (5 words)

Wrong: There has been a lot of research done to determine its causes. (12 wds)

Better: A lot of research has been done to determine its causes. (11 wds)

Best: Much research has been done to determine its causes. (9 wds)

Wrong: There were many factors that affected this situation. (8 wds)

Better: ~~There were~~ Many factors ~~that~~ affected this situation. (5 wds)

NOTE: many times you can delete "there is + that or which"

Wrong: There is one index that provides the correct information. (9 words)

Better: ~~There is~~ One index ~~that~~ provides the correct information. (6 words)

Wrong: There are several steps which I plan to complete. (9 words)

Better: I plan to complete several steps. (6 words)

2. Avoid "it is/was" at the beginning of sentences:

Wrong: It is recommended that we complete more research. (8 words)

Better: We should complete more research. (5 words)

We recommend that we complete more research. (7 words)

Wrong: It is our goal to serve the university community. (9 words)

Better: Our goal is to serve the university community. (8 words)

3. Avoid excessive words:

Wrong: This method is effective at removing oil from the surface. (10 words)

Better: This method effectively removes oil from the surface. (8 words)

Best: This method effectively removes surface oil. (6 words)

Wrong: The second reason is that Americans believe (7 words)

Better: Second, Americans believe.... (3 words)

4. Avoid nominalizations. Use verbs (action words) instead of nouns (things) or adjectives (descriptive words):

Wrong: Indirect predator control is the exclusion of predators through means such as.... (12 words)

Better: Indirect predator control excludes predators through means such as (9 words)

Wrong: This is dependant on fire. (5 words)

Better: This depends on fire. (4 words)

Wrong: They did not give an explanation for the debacle. (9 words)

Better: They did not explain the debacle. (6 words)

Wrong: The increasing electrical output requires the addition of extra modules. (10 wds)

Better: The increasing electrical output requires adding extra modules. (8 words)

5. Avoid strings of prepositional phrases:

Wrong: The states determined that there was a very real threat of the lack of depository sites for the waste from the nuclear plants at locations outside the region. (String of 6 phrases)

Better: The states determined that the lack of nuclear waste depository sites at locations outside their region posed a real threat. (String of 3 phrases)