

WORDY SENTENCES

Wordy sentences contain many unnecessary words. (Not just many words.) These sentences feel “watered down”—like you have to do a lot of work to gain a little information. Good writing is dense and concise; the words in the sentence work hard. Consider the following revisions.

Wordy: A few inches of snow on the ground **is all that is necessary in order for a person to be able** to go sledding. (bolded words could be cut)

Better: A few inches of snow is necessary to go sledding. (10 hard-working words)

Wordy: **All of the students who are new to this school** are required to attend a meeting **that has been scheduled** for Friday the **22nd of** September. (bolded words could be cut)

Better: New students are required to attend a meeting on Friday, September 22. (12 hard-working words)

Note: The problem with wordiness is not about the quantity of words; there is nothing wrong with a sentence having 25 or even 75 words as long as those words add information and detail. When reducing wordiness, be careful not to kill the richness and expressiveness of your writing.

Not wordy: A bird with crimson wings glided from the jungle canopy and landed gracefully on a nearby rock.

Not better: A bird flew from the trees to a rock.

PHRASES AND CONSTRUCTIONS TO AVOID

Wordy: It was George Washington who once said, “Happiness and moral duty are inseparably connected.”

Better: George Washington said, “Happiness and moral duty are inseparably connected.”

Wordy: Due to the fact that class is cancelled, we will postpone the quiz.

Better: Because class is cancelled, we will postpone the quiz.

Wordy: In spite of the fact that I am failing, I have enjoyed the class.

Better: Although I am failing, I have enjoyed the class.

Wordy: I bought a dog for the purpose of providing me with companionship.

Better: I bought a dog for companionship.

Wordy: I will return your papers in the near future.

Better: I will return your papers soon.

Wordy: In my own personal opinion torture is always wrong.

Better: In my opinion torture is always wrong.

Note: Sometimes wordiness results from a desire to cheaply meet the minimum word requirement of a writing assignment. Most instructors see straight through phony wordiness. In most cases, concisely worded, valuable material will be rewarded even if it comes up a little short.