

## TIPS & TRICKS

When revising for wordiness, look for the following two types of problems:

- Redundant Pairs—words that imply each other

### EXAMPLES

*true facts*

*future plans*

- Redundant Categories—words that designate their general categories

### EXAMPLES

*engineering field*

*large in size*

football, and baseball used to dominate the television ratings. Many athletes in traditional sports, with their big salaries and bad attitudes, have alienated viewers. Some viewers think that extreme sports athletes take their sports more seriously because they do not participate in them just for money. Extreme sports are especially popular with young viewers. Television analysts say that the traditional three-sport era may be over for good.

## Revising to Reduce Wordiness

Which would you rather read: a ten-page essay on the health benefits of broccoli or a one-or-two-paragraph statement on the subject? Skilled writers make every word count, suiting length to purpose. Your writing is most effective when it is clear, concise, and free of the clutter of unnecessary words. To avoid wordiness, keep these three points in mind.

- Use only the words you need to make your point.
- Avoid complicated words where simple ones will do.
- Do not repeat words unless it is absolutely necessary.

Sometimes you can fix a wordy sentence by taking out whole groups of unnecessary words. At other times you can revise by reducing clauses to phrases and both clauses and phrases to single words.

## Eliminating Unnecessary Words

The following paragraph is an example of wordy writing. Lines have been drawn through the unnecessary words. First, read the paragraph aloud, including the words that have been crossed out. Then, read the shorter, more concise version. Notice the difference the revisions make in the sound of the paragraph.

Anyone who has ever ~~in the course of his or her life~~ searched the World Wide Web knows how time-consuming the process of ~~searching~~ can be. Although ~~helpful~~ search engines can aid you in finding what you are looking for, often the specific information you seek remains elusive ~~and out of reach~~. At other times, a search can ~~yield far too much information and~~

overload you with tens of thousands of irrelevant Web sites ~~that are not important to your search. To address this problem, in 1998, researchers working before the end of the millennium,~~ developed a system called ARC, which stands for automatic resource compiler, in order to amend the situation. ARC ~~is a technique that~~ analyzes how Internet documents are linked to each other. Web pages are ~~categorized and~~ put into two separate types of sites: "authorities" and "hubs." Authorities ~~are called such because they~~ are sites that are cited by many other documents on the subject. Hubs are pages that link to a lot of authorities. By categorizing sites, ARC helps sort useful information from useless material ~~that will not help the searcher.~~

Following are more examples of how less can be more when it comes to sentences. Can you see other ways in which these sentences might be revised to reduce wordiness?

WORDY Hiking in the wild, untamed, natural wilderness is, I believe, a great thing to do in my opinion.

BETTER Hiking in the wilderness is, I believe, a great thing to do.

WORDY From far away and at a great distance, you can see for miles, looking at huge, enormous mesas that fill the expanse of the sky.

BETTER From far away, you can see mesas that fill the expanse of sky.

### Exercise 3 Revising Wordy Sentences

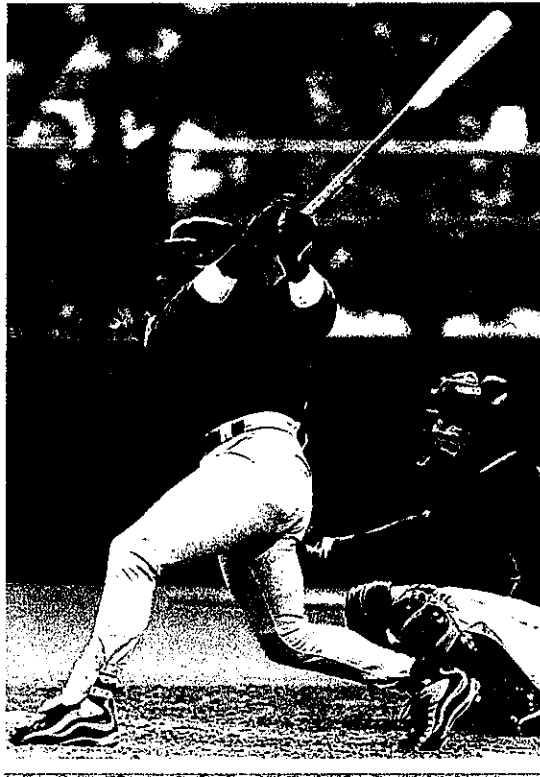
Revise each of the following sentences to reduce wordiness. If a sentence is already concise, write C.

1. One of the many things that the poet William Shakespeare is known for is his sonnets.
2. In 1609, Shakespeare published his sonnets all together in one collection during the early seventeenth century.
3. Much mystery surrounds Shakespeare's sonnets, as many questions about the sonnets remain debated, discussed, and unresolved.
4. Among the conflicting theories lies the question of who the speaker in the sonnets who voices concerns really is.
5. Despite the controversy, however, most scholars agree that the sonnets are examples of extraordinary writing in the English language.

6. Another Shakespeare mystery involves uncertainty regarding his physical appearance.
7. Even though Shakespeare is famous throughout the world everywhere, no one can be sure about how he really looked in actual life.
8. From portraits of Shakespeare that have survived and withstood the passage of time, he appears to have been a slim man of slight build and average height.
9. Artists rendered Shakespeare with well-proportioned features and expressive eyes.
10. Although we may never learn more about Shakespeare the man himself, we can continue to learn and gain information about Shakespeare the writer by studying his magnificent works.

#### **Exercise 4** Revising a Paragraph by Eliminating Unnecessary Words

Revise the following paragraph to make it more concise. Eliminate unnecessary words, keeping the original meaning of each sentence. You may need to change some verb forms, too.



Few athletes earn lasting reputations that endure in the record books and in the hearts of admirers. However, the accomplishments of athlete and Chicago Cubs baseball player Sammy Sosa will likely be remembered for a long and extensive time to come. It is true that in 1998 he broke the previous record for number of home runs in a season; he is now second only to Mark McGwire, who also broke the old record during the same season that Sosa broke the record. Sosa is also known as a compassionate, caring human being in his native Dominican Republic. Sosa grew up poor in his Dominican homeland and had to shine shoes to help his family. Now he invests in various businesses there, in order to create opportunities and positions for other poor and impoverished children.

## Reducing Groups of Words

Writing concisely means using only as many words as you need. The following charts give examples of how you can trim away excess words from your writing.

### Clauses Reduced to Phrases

Clause	When Jessica was doing algebra equations in the library, she forgot the time.
Participial Phrase	Doing algebra equations in the library, Jessica forgot the time.
Clause	Earlier in the day, she had decided that she wanted to visit Davida after school.
Infinitive Phrase	Earlier in the day, she had decided to visit Davida after school.
Clause	The problems that were about applied algebra took forever to complete.
Prepositional Phrase	The problems about applied algebra took forever to complete.
Clause	Davida's sisters, one of whom is Sarah and the other Suzanne, walked into the library.
Appositive Phrase	Davida's sisters, Sarah and Suzanne, walked into the library.

### TIPS & TRICKS

You do not want to delete words that clarify your meaning or add interest to your sentences. When considering whether or not to take out a word or phrase, ask yourself if the sentence would mean the same thing without it.

The hat that belongs to Martin is the nicest.  
Martin's hat is the nicest.

Martin is a person who keeps up with fashion.

Martin is a fashionable person.

Cherishing his sneakers, he cleans them nightly.

He cleans his cherished sneakers nightly.

He appraises other people's wardrobes in an expert manner.

He appraises other people's wardrobes expertly.

Following is a list of concise, one-word replacements for some common wordy phrases.

Wordy	Simpler
at which time	when
by means of	by
due to the fact that	because, since
in spite of the fact that	although
in the event that	if
the fact is that	actually

### Exercise 5 Revising Sentences Through Reduction

Reduce the italicized clauses and phrases in the following sentences by deleting, replacing, and rearranging words. Be sure to keep the original meaning of each sentence.

1. Movies were born in 1895, *at which time* two brothers *who were named Louis and Auguste Lumière* offered the first public screening in Paris.
2. That screening consisted of several one-minute film clips *that showed workers who were leaving* a factory and a baby *who was having lunch*.
3. Thomas Edison has also been cited as the inventor of movies *due to the fact that* he invented the Kinetoscope in 1889, *but the fact is that* his device could only be used by one viewer at a time.
4. *In America*, animation got its beginnings in 1906, *and the beginning of animated features, which are full-length movies, was in 1918*.
5. Animation has subjects *that can be seen as* both serious and comic, however, comedy seems *ideally and naturally* suited to animation.
6. The movies *that were produced first* had no sound, so actors *who acted in an expressive and physically agile manner, one of whom was Charlie Chaplin and another Buster Keaton*, became stars.
7. When sound was introduced *with success* in 1927, many movie directors thought it was *horrible and awful*.
8. Filmmakers *from the early era* preferred to make black-and-white movies; color seemed like *an extra, added annoyance and nuisance that audiences would find annoying*.



Charlie Chaplin.