

Writing concisely does NOT mean cutting out ideas. It means avoiding useless words, expressions, and repetitive information. The following strategies are meant to improve conciseness:

- **Delete words that mean little or nothing**

kind of	actually	particular	really	certain	various
virtually	individual	basically	generally	given	particularly

**Example:**

Productivity **actually** depends on **certain** factors that **basically** involve psychology more than **any particular** technology. ☒  
 Productivity depends on psychology more than on technology. ☑

**Practice:**

Balancing the budget by Friday is an impossibility without some kind of extra help.

- **Delete words that repeat the meaning of other words**

full and complete	hope and trust	any and all	each and every
true and accurate	hopes and desires	first and foremost	basic and fundamental

**Example:**

She proposed various **and sundry** explanations for the procedure. ☒  
 She proposed various explanations for the procedure. ☑  
 Their software programs demonstrated and showed that many companies and businesses could benefit and profit from eliminating unnecessary overhead and expenses. ☒  
 Their software showed that companies could profit from eliminating unnecessary overhead. ☑

**Practice:**

Parents cannot tend to their children's each and every hope and desire.

- **Delete words implied by other words**

terrible tragedy	basic fundamentals	final outcome	true facts
future plans	free gift	each individual	various different

**Example:**

Do not try to *predict* those **future** events that will **completely revolutionize** society, because **past history** shows that it is the **final outcome** of minor events that **unexpectedly surprises** us more. ☒  
 Do not try to predict revolutionary events, because history shows that the outcome of minor events surprises us more. ☑

**Practice:**

The consensus of opinions is that the election has been a success.  
 The holes must be aligned in an accurate manner.

- **Replace a phrase with a word**

**Examples:**

carefully read what you have written	→	edit
the thing to do before anything else	→	first
use X instead of Y	→	replace
nouns instead of verbs	→	nominalization
sequence of subjects and verbs	→	clauses

In the event that you finish early, contact this office. ☒  
 If you finish early, contact the office. ☑  
 There is a need for more careful inspections of all welds. ☒  
 You must inspect all welds more carefully. ☑

**Practice:**

In the situation where a class closes, you may petition to get in.  
There is a need for more careful inspection of the entire warehouse.  
Due to the fact that the mice were unavailable, we delayed the experiment.

• **Change negatives to affirmatives**

not different	→	similar	not the same	→	different
not notice	→	overlook	not often	→	rarely
not careful	→	careless	not many	→	few
not allow	→	prevent	not stop	→	continue

**Examples:**

**Except** when you have **failed** to submit applications **without** documentation, benefits will **not** be **denied**. ☒

You receive benefits only if you submit your documents. ☑

To receive benefits, submit your documents. ☑

**Practice:**

Do not submit payments if you have not notified this office.

There is no possibility in regard to a reduction in the size of the federal deficit if reduction in deferral spending are not introduced.

• **Delete intensifiers if they do not intensify or if they provide vague information**

<b>Adverbs:</b>	really	very	quite	extremely	severely	clearly
	obviously	undoubtedly	certainly	of course	indeed	inevitably
	invariably	always	never	rarely	sometimes	
<b>Adjectives:</b>	key	central	crucial	basic	fundamental	major
	principal	essential				
<b>Verbs:</b>	show	prove	establish	as you/we/everyone knows		it is clear/obvious that

**Examples:**

By the time she got home, Merdine was *very tired*. ☒

By the time she got home, Merdine was *exhausted*. ☑

She was also *really hungry*. ☒

She was also *hungry* [or *famished*]. ☑

For a century now, **all** liberals have argued against **any** censorship of art, and **every** court has found their arguments so **completely** persuasive that **not a** person **any** longer remembers how they were countered. As a result, today, censorship is **totally** a thing of the past. ☒

For **about** a century now, **many** liberals have argued against censorship of art, and **most** courts have found their arguments persuasive **enough** that **few** people **may** remember **exactly** how they were countered. As a result, today, censorship is **virtually** a thing of the past. ☑

**Practice:**

In my research, I prove that all the people with a gun at home basically use it to kill themselves or a family member instead of to protect themselves from a totally unknown intruder.

• **Avoid metadiscourse**

The writer's intentions, directions to the reader (e.g., The last point I would like to make is that ...)

The topic (e.g., So far as China's industrial development is concerned, it will take ...)

The structure of the text (e.g., This section introduces another problem, ... . The first thing to say about this is that ...)

Hedges and intensifiers (e.g., There seem to be some evidence to suggest that all the ...)

**Examples:**

**The last point I would like to make** is that in regard to men-women relationships, **it is important to keep in mind** that the greatest changes have occurred in how they work together. ☒

The greatest change in men-women relationships have occurred in how they work together. ☑

Men and women have changed their relationships most in how they work together. ☑

High divorce rates **have been observed** to occur in areas that **have been determined to have** low population density. ☒

High population rates occur in areas with low population density. ☒

**This section introduces another** problem, that of noise pollution. **The first thing to say about it** is that noise pollution exists not only ... ☒

**Another** problem is noise pollution. **First**, it exists not only ... ☒

**Practice:**

So far as China's industrial development is concerned, it has long surpassed that of Japan.

In regard to a vigorous style, the most important feature is a short, concrete subject followed by a forceful verb.

- **Avoid empty openers**

**Examples:**

*There is* a prize in every box of Quacko cereal. ☒

A Prize *is* in every box of Quacko cereal. ☒

*There are* two security guards at the gate. ☒

Two security guards *stand* at the gate. ☒

**Practice:**

There is always a car waiting for her outside her office.

- **Slim down your phrasal verbs**

[Phrasal verbs are usually two-word verbs consisting of verb + adverb or verb + preposition.] When trying to cut down words, consider using their one-word synonym.

**Examples:**

to add up to	→	to equal
to back something up	→	to reverse
to blow up	→	to explode
to cut in	→	to interrupt
to make up	→	to forgive each other
to put up with	→	to tolerate

**Practice:**

An inmate has tried to break out of prison last night.

The crime involved blowing up a bridge.

- **Further practice**

Each individual researcher will test one hypothesis.

These companies have shown great interest and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the team.

Gains with the semiconductor will be driven by an expected rise in consumer spending and capital investment on electronic and upgrades.

As the smartphone industry continues to expand, there is a growing desire among consumers to have the ability to hail a cab via a mobile device.

PCR has completely revolutionized biochemistry.

It is expected that the demand from business and consumers that delayed spending during this economic downturn will fuel growth as systems are upgraded and outdated devices are replaced.

**References:**

About.com. (n.d). *Top 5 Tips to Cut the Clutter*. Retrieved from:

[http://grammar.about.com/od/words/tp/clutter\\_tips.htm](http://grammar.about.com/od/words/tp/clutter_tips.htm)

EnglishClub.com. (n.d). *Phrasal Verb List*. Retrieved from: <http://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/phrasal-verbs-list.htm>

OWL Purdue. (27.2.2013). *Conciseness*. Retrieved from: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/572/01/>

Strunk, W. (1918). *The Elements of Style*. Ithaca: Press of W.P Humphrey.

The Guide to Grammar and Writing. (n.d) *Writing Concise Sentences*. Retrieved from <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/concise.htm>

Williams, J. and Colomb, G. (2007). *Styles: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. Toronto: Longman.

Williams, J. M. and Bizup, J. (2009). *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson.