

Eliminating Wordiness

For a sentence to flow well, it should not be cluttered with unnecessary words. Sentences should be concise and direct.

Remove Unnecessary Words

Avoid redundancy by removing words that do not contribute to a sentence.

Examples: **I enjoy power walking at a quick pace in the nighttime twilight under the dark sky.**

She is one of the many girls who attends and walks the corridors of my school.

Remove Redundant Words

Remove words that are redundant. These are some common pairs of words that are redundant; one word should be removed from each pair.

first and foremost
each and every
any and all
hopes and desires
always and forever
final outcome
ancient history
future plans
free gift
terrible tragedy
reflect back

Remove Meaningless Intensifiers

Intensifiers such as *so*, *very*, *many*, *quite*, *really*, and *definitely* are unnecessary. If they add no significance to the sentence, they can be removed.

Examples: Lisa is ~~definitely~~ a ~~very~~ skilled writer.

She ~~really~~, ~~truly~~ dances ~~quite~~ well.

Remove Prepositions

Limit the number of prepositions used in one sentence. Using excessive prepositions consecutively within a sentence is known as a “preposition pile-up” or “preposition choo-choo train.”

Example: I go ~~to~~ work] [~~from~~ ~~between~~ 9:00 a.m.] [~~to~~ ~~about~~ 5:00 p.m.] [~~with~~ *and take* a one-hour break] [~~in~~ ~~between~~] [~~at~~ ~~about~~ *around* noon].

I work from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and take a one-hour break around noon.

Avoid Lengthiness

Avoid lengthy expressions that make a sentence wordy. Eliminating this problem may require moving words around in the sentence.

Example 1: ~~At this point in time,~~ *There are currently* ~~far too many prisoners of war, also known as~~ (POWs).

There are currently too many prisoners of war (POWs).

Example 2: ~~If you really want to know, I can truthfully say that I actually don't really care about~~ where we ~~go to eat for~~ dinner.

I don't care where we eat dinner.

Activity

Eliminate any unnecessary words in the following sentences. Rephrase if necessary.

1. I really love my daughter very much from the bottom of my heart.
2. In my essay paper, I wrote about my absolute hopes and desires.
3. There are possibly only three reasons why she could have done what she did.
4. Water polo is basically a water sport that involves a multitude of players struggling to compete against one another in successfully capturing the ball in the respective goal.
5. After that fight that we had, our amicable friendship is basically ancient history.
6. The honest truth is that I really do not like shrimp very much.
7. About the email you sent me last week on July 3rd about your vacation, I wanted to talk to you in person before responding.

8. If the two groups cooperate together, there will definitely be positive benefits for both.
9. There are some people who think that the metric system is basically un-American.

Answer Key for Activity

(Note that answers may vary.)

1. I love my daughter.
2. In my essay, I wrote about my desires.
3. There are three reasons she could have done that.
4. Water polo is a multiplayer sport in which the objective is to get the ball in the goal.
5. After that fight, our friendship is history.
6. I dislike shrimp.
7. I want to speak in-person before replying to the email you sent on July 3rd.
8. If the two groups cooperate, both will benefit.
9. Some people think the metric system is un-American.

References

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