

Rubric Category	Language and Syntax
Grade/Score	Grades 6-12 / Scores 2, 3, and 4
CCSS Writing Standards	W1d, W4, Language 1,3
Argument Type	All arguments

# Being Concise

*Students practice varied approaches to crafting more concise writing such as eliminating unnecessary words, avoiding passive voice, and using robust language.*

## Understanding the Expectations

A simple rule for good writing is never to use two words when you can use one. Rather than writing with lengthy cumbersome phrases, the writer should use carefully chosen single words as much as possible. The writer should also eliminate any other unnecessary words. This keeps your writing clean and allows it to simply do the work of arguing your position.

Don't fall into the trap of being overly wordy. Most students at one time or another think that being wordy sounds more academic and may even help you get a better score on a writing assignment. In truth, it's quite the opposite. Concise writing enhances everything you say instead of distracting from your message. The following checklist is a helpful guide to writing concisely.

*Recommendations for Concise Writing:*

- Replace wordy phrases with simpler words/phrases.

Examples:

*persons of the Buddhist faith = Buddhists*

*sufficient degree of = enough*

*thoughts of a serious quality = serious thoughts*

*in light of the fact that = since*

*at the present moment = now*

*consensus of opinion = consensus*

*due to the fact that = because*

*in this day and age = today*

*for the most part = mostly*

- Eliminate redundancy (using unnecessary words that mean the same thing)

Examples:

*each and every = each*

*unintended mistake = mistake*

*absolutely certain = certain*

*added bonus = bonus*

*unexpected surprise = surprise*

*our future hope = our hope*

*blue in color = blue*

- Eliminate unnecessary intensifiers (adverbs or adverbial phrases that create emphasis)

Examples:

*Really, very, a lot, so much, very much so*

- Prefer verbs to nouns.

Examples:

*It is our expectation... = We expect...*

*It is John's intention... = John intends...*

*We will make a recommendation. = We will recommend.*

- Avoid negations (negations are when a sentence is stated in the negative.)

Examples:

*I do not approve of this. = I disapprove of this.*

*I am not happy. = I am sad.*

*He is not healthy. = He is ill.*

- Prefer the active to the passive voice (Active voice is when the subject performs the action of the verb. Passive voice is when the subject is acted upon by the verb. See examples below.)

PASSIVE: The house that was owned by the Smith family...

ACTIVE: The Smith's house...

PASSIVE: It has been decided by the Board of Trustees that the budget will be passed.

ACTIVE: The Board of Trustees decided to pass the budget.

*Time to practice!*

In the following exercises, revise the phrases or sentences as directed.

### **Replacing wordy phrases:**

Revise the following phrases to single words:

in order to

give consideration to

in the final analysis

I am of the opinion that

in view of the fact that

a large number of

make contact with

regardless of the fact that

for the purpose of

in close proximity to

has the capacity

in the event that

aware of the fact that

### **Eliminating redundancy:**

Revise the following phrases to single words.

true facts

continue on

refer back

join together

past history

circle around

basic fundamentals

expensive in price

crisis situation

cooperate together

join together

important essentials

positive benefits

component parts

**Eliminating unnecessary intensifiers:**

The girl was so very sad.

The very small puppy was really so cute.

**Preferring verbs to nouns:**

The young girl's refusal of the request is a certainty.

It was his view that the event should not have been an occurrence.

**Avoiding negations:**

I am not in agreement with the candidate's position on trade.

The child did not stand still the whole time we weren't inside.

**Preferring the active to the passive voice:**

The door was shut by the strong gust of wind.

The writhing pink salmon was eaten by the grizzly bear.

## Trying it Out

Select a paragraph from your writing that needs revision. If you can find a paragraph that you feel is particularly wordy, use that. If not, choose a paragraph that is relatively longer than the others. Apply the revision principles reviewed in the focus lesson. Use the checklist below as a guide. It is likely that you will find yourself making many changes in a single paragraph at times and perhaps only a few in others. If you find that your revision efforts are minimal, that's great. Select another paragraph and continue revising with the same checklist.

- Replace wordy phrases.
- Eliminate redundancy.
- Eliminate unnecessary intensifiers.
- Prefer verbs to nouns.
- Avoid negations.
- Prefer the active to the passive voice.

If possible, exchange your revised paragraph with a peer editing partner. Edit your partner's work while they edit yours. Discuss and exchange feedback. If you have time, repeat the process with an additional paragraph.

## Writing it Up

Continue your revision efforts with the remaining parts of your paper. If you are still in the early stages of your writing, apply the tips to writing as you go. Work on creating a mindfulness of the tips you have been practicing. Your goal is to develop good writing habits that include the rules you have been practicing here.