

Wordiness

In Corbett's *The Little English Handbook* (5th edition), a **wordy sentence** is defined as "one in which a writer has used more words than are needed to say what has to be said. The superfluous words simply clutter up a sentence and impede its movement." This definition is pretty hard to understand, right? That is because of its wordiness; in general, the more concise a statement, the easier it is to understand.

When writing, it's easy to use extra words in order to emphasize style by creating a fabulous metaphor, giving a detailed description, and so on, but it is often better (for your reader and your instructor) to avoid wordiness.

Examples:

Wordy: In this modern world of today, we must get an education that will prepare us for a job in our vocation in life. (23 words)

Revised: In the modern world, we must get an education that will prepare us for a job. (16 words)

Wordy: These rivers do not contain fish, due to the fact that the flow of water is too rapid. (18 words)

Revised: These rivers do not contain fish because the water flows too rapidly. (12 words)

Wordy: The meaning, at least in my own eyes, that he is trying to convey in the poem "Arms and the Boy" is of the evilness of war in that it forces innocent people to take up the instrument of death and destruction and then tries to teach them to love to use them to kill other human beings. (58 words)

Revised: As I see it, the poet's thesis in "Arms and the Boy" is that war is evil, because it not only forces people to take up arms but makes them use these weapons to kill other human beings. (38 words)

Revising Wordy Phrases

| Wordy | Concise |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| At the present time | Now |
| At this point in time | Now |
| For the purpose of | For |
| Due to the fact that | Because |
| On account of the fact that | Because |
| Until such time as | Until |
| In the event that | If |
| By means of | By |
| In the vicinity of | Near |
| Have the ability to | Be able to |

From Krizner & Mandell's The Brief Holt Handbook, revised 2nd ed.

Practice Exercises:

Identify the wordiness within the following sentences and rewrite as necessary.

1. In my opinion, from the reading that was completed last night, I feel that David Sedaris was trying to say that learning a foreign language in a foreign country is confusing, mainly through how he showed his struggles with his class and also how he mentioned his classmates' problems as well.

2. For the project, should we pick a topic that relates to our personal lives or should we choose a subject to write about that deals with one of the various topics that we have addressed at some point during the semester?

3. Because of the rainy weather, I'm feeling like maybe I should stay in and do some of my homework from biology class.

Possible Revisions #3: Maybe I should stay in to do biology homework because of the rain. OR I feel like I should do some of my biology homework because of the rain.)