

1. Writing Clear Sentences
2. Combining Sentences
3. Improving Sentence Style

3. Improving Sentence Style

A. Revising Sentences by Varying Sentence Beginnings

Each of the following sentences begins with the subject. Revise each sentence so that it begins with a single-word modifier, a phrase, or a clause.

EXAMPLE 1. Nick, Daniel, and Ann are members of the planning committee for the class picnic. They were assigned the task of arranging the food for the picnic.

1. Members of the planning committee for the class picnic, Nick, Daniel, and Ann were assigned the task of arranging the food for the picnic.

1. Daniel, Nick, and Ann were concerned because they had not cooked for such a big group before.
2. Mr. Crawford, the class sponsor, explained that they didn't have to do the cooking themselves and put their minds at ease.
3. They kept the menu for the picnic simple, but the quantities of food were still enormous.
4. Daniel spent hours on the telephone and called around for the best prices.
5. Nick borrowed a pickup truck from his uncle later, and he and Ann bought the food and other supplies.

B. Revising Sentences to Reduce Wordiness

The following sentences are wordy. Revise each sentence, eliminating unnecessary words and reducing clauses and phrases to make the sentence more concise.

EXAMPLE 1. At that point in time, it was necessary for students who had proceeded to sit in the first rows to find alternative seating in other parts of the auditorium.

1. Then, students who were sitting in the first rows had to move to different seats.

6. Over the course of the next two or three minutes, our speaker, who is also our distinguished guest, will be commencing his arrival in the auditorium.
7. As the chief administrative and instructional official of your institution of learning, I am delighted, thrilled, excited, pleased, and privileged to offer a welcoming hand to the elected official who heads our city.
8. Students, please rise from a seating position and join together with me in singing our national anthem, in which we will be led by Natalie Cranwick, a member of our senior class who will be graduating this year.
9. At the close of the ceremonies that open this assembly, I myself will be personally presenting the awards to senior class members who have been selected for awards by their classmates.
10. I respectfully request that you do not display your appreciation of each of your classmates one at a time, but rather restrain yourselves until the last of the awards has been awarded to its recipients.

C. Revising Paragraphs by Varying Sentence Structure.

The following paragraph is made up of simple sentences. Rewrite the paragraph, combining sentences and using a variety of sentence structures.

Varying Sentence Beginnings

Most sentences begin with a subject followed by a verb.

EXAMPLES **Canoeing is** a popular activity. **Some people prefer** kayaking to canoeing.

You can improve the style of your writing by beginning some sentences with introductory words, phrases, and clauses instead of with subjects.

In each example below, the first version is clear. However, the second version brings the ideas into sharper focus by shifting the emphasis.

BLAND Bernice won the sculpting contest. She told her best friend Emi as soon as she found out.

BETTER Bernice won the sculpting contest. **As soon as she found out**, she told her best friend Emi.

BLAND Emi was happy for Bernice. She told Ari the good news over the phone.

BETTER Emi was happy for Bernice. **Over the phone**, she told Ari the good news.

Sometimes the best way to vary sentence beginnings is to reduce a short sentence to an introductory word, phrase, or clause and attach it to another sentence.

BLAND Emi kept Ari on the phone for an hour. She is talkative and sociable.
BETTER **Talkative and sociable**, Emi kept Ari on the phone for an hour.
BLAND Ari was excited to hear that Bernice had won. He wanted to congratulate her. Or,
BETTER **Excited to hear that Bernice had won**, Ari wanted to congratulate her. Or,
Ari was excited to hear that Bernice had won and wanted to congratulate her.

Varying Sentence Beginnings

Sentence Connectives

A tropism is a growth response in which the direction a plant grows is determined by a particular stimulus.

Consequently, phototropisms are growth responses to light.

The growth of a plant toward light is called positive phototropism. **However**, the growth of a plant's roots away from light is called negative phototropism.

Appositives and Appositive Phrases

Another example of this phenomenon, **gravitropism**, is the growth of a plant in response to gravity. **An example of positive gravitropism**, the downward growth of roots occurs frequently.

Single-Word Modifiers

Strangely, some plants respond to touch. **Curly and green**, grapevines grow in response to touch and are therefore thigmotropic.

Phrase Modifiers

From the window of my kitchen, I can see many types of plants.

Looking closely, I noticed that most of the plants were in need of water.

To address this problem, I went outside and watered the plants.

Clause Modifiers

Because I noticed the situation in time, I was able to keep the plants from dying.

Although I am not the best gardener, I am eager to learn more about plants.

Revising to Reduce Wordiness

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. In other situations, 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.

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.

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 a great distance away, 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.

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	phrases
	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.
	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.
	The problems that were about applied algebra took forever to complete.	Prepositional Phrase The problems about applied algebra took forever to complete.
	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.

Clauses and Phrases Reduced to Single Words	Clause / phrase	Single word
	The hat that belongs to Mark is the nicest.	Word Mark's hat is the nicest.
	Mark is a person who keeps up with fashion.	Word Mark is a fashionable person.
	Cherishing his sneakers, he cleans them nightly.	Word He cleans his cherished sneakers nightly.
	He appraises other people's wardrobes in an expert manner.	Word 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

Stringy Sentences

For variety, you will sometimes want to join sentences and sentence parts with *and*. If you string many ideas together with *and*, though, you create a **stringy sentence**. Stringy sentences ramble on and on. They do not give the reader a chance to pause between ideas.

STRINGY	The ostrich is the largest living bird, and it stands nearly eight feet tall, and it weighs over three hundred pounds when it is fully grown, and this speedy bird can run up to forty miles an hour!
BETTER	The ostrich is the largest living bird. It stands nearly eight feet tall, and it weighs over three hundred pounds when it is fully grown. This speedy bird can run up to forty miles an hour!

In the revised version, only two ideas are linked by *and*.