CONCISENESS

Wordiness is not a problem of incorrect grammar. A sentence may be perfectly grammatical but still contain unneeded words that interfere with the clarity and force of your idea.

Unnecessary words pad your sentences without adding to your meaning, and they can make your writing unclear. You want to make every word count. Remember, however, that writing concisely is not the same as writing briefly; detail and originality should not be cut with needless words. Rather, the length of the expression should be appropriate to the thought.

You may find yourself writing wordily when you are unsure of your subject or when your thoughts are tangled. It is fine, even necessary, to stumble and grope while drafting. But straighten out your ideas and aim for conciseness during revision and editing.

Wordy paragraph (87 words)

The highly pressured nature of critical-care nursing is due to the fact that the patients have life-threatening illnesses. Critical-care nurses must have possession of steady nerves to care for patients who are critically ill and very sick. The nurses must also have possession of interpersonal skills. They must also have medical skills. It is considered by most health-care professionals that these nurses are essential if there is to be improvement of patients who are now in critical care from that status to the status of intermediate care.

Concise paragraph (37 words)

Critical-care nursing is highly pressured because the patients have life-threatening illnesses. Critical-care nurses must possess steady nerves and interpersonal and medical skills. Most health-care professionals consider these nurses essential if patients are to improve to intermediate care.

TIPS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Focus on the subject and verb. Using the subjects and verbs of your sentences for the key actors and actions will reduce words and emphasize important ideas.

Wordy The reason why most of the country shifts to daylight savings time is that winter days are much shorter than summer days.

Concise Most of the country shifts to daylight savings time because winter days are much shorter than summer days.

Wordy The occurrence of the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, is an event taking place about December 22.

Concise The winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, occurs about December 22.
Wordy  
During its winter the northern hemisphere is tilted farthest away from the sun, so the nights are made longer and the days are made shorter. (Note the passive voice).

Concise  
During its winter the northern hemisphere tilts away from the sun, making the nights longer and the days shorter.

2. **Cut empty words.** Empty words walk in place, gaining little or nothing in meaning. Many of them can be cut entirely. The following are just a few examples.

   all things considered                in a manner of speaking
   as far as I’m concerned              in my opinion
   for all intents and purposes         last but not least
   for the most part                    more or less

Still others can be reduced from several words to a single word:

   at all times                        always
   at the present time                 now, yet
   because of the fact that            because
   by virtue of the fact               because
   due to the fact                     because
   for the purpose of                  for
   in order to                         to
   in the event that                   if
   in the final analysis               finally

Wordy  
As far as I am concerned, because of the fact that a situation of discrimination continues to exist in the field of engineering, women have not at the present time achieved equality with men.

Concise  
Because of continuing discrimination in engineering, women have not yet achieved equality with men.

3. **Cut unneeded repetition.** Unnecessary repetition weakens sentences.

Wordy  
Many unskilled workers without training in a particular job are unemployed and do not have any work.

Concise  
Many unskilled workers are unemployed.
4. Cut there is/are/was/were or it is/was construction.

Wordy There were delays and cost overruns that plagued construction of the Channel Tunnel. It is the expectation of investors to earn profits at last, now that there are trains passing daily through the tunnel.

Concise Delays and cost overruns plagued construction of the Channel Tunnel. Investors expect to earn profits at last, now that the trains pass daily through the tunnel.

5. Combine sentences. Often the information in two or more sentences can be combined into one tight sentence.

Wordy An unexpected problem with the Channel Tunnel is stowaways. The stowaways are mostly illegal immigrants. They are trying to smuggle themselves into England. They cling to train roofs and undercarriages.

Concise An unexpected problem with the Channel Tunnel is stowaways, mostly illegal immigrants who are trying to smuggle themselves into England by clinging to train roofs and undercarriages.

Rewrite the sentence, eliminating the unneeded works or phrases.

1. Tom listed his previous experience as well as his future goals.

2. The reason I was late was due to the fact that my car broke down.

3. With the exception of Smith, all the students came to an agreement.

4. A man by the name of Will Jackson wrote this message.

5. The committee will hold a future meeting for the purpose of making a decision about the new policy.

6. Daniel is now employed at a private rehabilitation center working as a registered physical therapist.

7. Joel was determined in his mind to lose weight.

8. Our fifth patient, in room six, is a mentally ill patient.

9. The best teachers help each student to become a better student both academically and emotionally.

10. In my opinion, our current immigration policy is misguided.

11. We will file the appropriate papers in the event that we are unable to meet the deadline.

12. The financial analyst claimed that because of volatile market conditions she could not make an estimate of the company's future profits.

13. His assistant is responsible for monitoring and balancing the budgets for travel, contract services, and personnel.
14. There is another lesson that tells the story of Charles Darwin and introduces the theory of evolution.

15. All too often, athletes with marginal academic skills have been recruited by our coaches.

16. We took a side trip to Monticello, which was the home of Thomas Jefferson.

17. It is pretty important in being a successful graphic designer to have technical knowledge and at one and the same moment an eye for color and balance.

18. A typical autocross course consists of at least two straightaways, and the rest of the course is made up of numerous slaloms and several sharp turns.