

Wiping Out Wordiness

It is important for writers to be concise. Even papers with good organization and content can suffer from wordiness. Here are some strategies to help keep your paper “short and snappy”:

Get Rid of Meaningless Words

The movie was kind of exciting; I felt that basically it captured the feeling of being in space.

Simplified: The movie was exciting; it captured the feeling of being in space.

Eliminate “Doubled” Words

The president wanted each and every senator to vote.

Simplified: The president wanted every senator to vote.

Delete Redundant Phrases

Santa Claus is round in shape and sharp in wit.

Simplified: Santa Claus is round and witty.

Substitute Words for Phrases

In the event of a terrorist attack, there is a need for us to be calm.

Simplified: If there is a terrorist attack, we must be calm.

Change Negatives to Affirmatives

It is not that often we find a small town with not many bars.

Simplified: It is rare to find a small town with few bars.

Eliminate Unneeded Phrases

It has been determined that divorce rates are increasing each year.

Simplified: Divorce rates are increasing each year.

Avoid an Unneeded Amount of Hedging

Perhaps the study suggests that beer seems to cause brain damage.

Simplified: The study suggests that beer causes brain damage.

These principles are taken from Joseph M. Williams’ book *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (New York: Pearson, 2005), which is available for your use in the Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors.