

# CONCISENESS

As Donald Hall counsels in *Writing Well*, “Conciseness and precision go together. We ramble on in our first drafts or in our daily writing, assuming connections and causes but not stating them.” If our words are cluttered on the page, our ideas will come across to our readers as cluttered, too.

The following are some of the words, phrases, and sentence structures that we should automatically suspect of obscuring the real meaning in our writing. Though sometimes a lengthy sentence is necessary to get across a complex idea, wordiness for its own sake is usually self-defeating.

To be more concise and precise, consider editing out:

## **unneded intensifiers**

*very, definitely, rather, extremely, basically, obviously*

## **redundancies**

*young infants, happy smile, hardworking and diligent*

## **passive voice**

*The measure was approved by the committee and was then to be voted on by the entire faculty.* →

The committee approved the measure, and the faculty will vote on it. →

The faculty will vote on the measure approved by the committee.

## **there is/ there are / it is constructions**

*There are many different awards that equestrian competitors can win.* →

Equestrians can win many different awards.

*It is true that the first pancake always burns.* →

The first pancake always burns.

## **excessive pronouns (make them plural when possible)**

*Any student who left his or her ID card in the library when he or she checked out a reserve book for his or her night class must claim the ID himself or herself.* →

Students who left their ID cards in the library when checking out reserve books for their night classes must claim their IDs themselves.

## **using a clause when a phrase would do**

*Ben Franklin decided that each week he would eliminate one of his habits that he found objectionable.* →

Ben Franklin decided that each week he would eliminate one objectionable habit.

*Most of the trees that settlers decided to plant in Colorado were not made for the kind of arid soil that the Rocky Mountain region has.* →

Most of the trees planted by settlers in Colorado were not made for the Rocky Mountain region’s arid soil.

## **unnecessary verbal phrases**

*to make a determination* → determine

*to come to a conclusion* → conclude

## **wordy “stock phrases”**

*due to the fact that* → because

*at this point in time* → now

*there is a possibility that* → possibly

*during the time in which* → while