Writing concisely is a difficult process. Often, writers struggle to identify what needs adjusting in their drafts. Some writers may feel adding extra words or phrases lends sophistication to their writing, when in fact it creates clutter and can confuse readers. Learning to recognize wordiness, repetition, and vague or unnecessary language is an important tool to ensure your writing expresses your ideas as clearly and concisely as possible. Examining word choice, concision, and sentence clarity are important aspects of the revision process.

Below, we outline several ways in which your writing can become excessive, and show you how you can clean it up and improve your drafts.

Wordiness

Using more words than you need complicates your sentences and buries your points. Here are two of the most common phrases to avoid and how you can revise them out of your writing:

Due to the fact that

EXAMPLE: Many people prefer Marvel Comics, ***due to the fact that*** they explore more characters in their canon.

REVISED: Many people prefer Marvel Comics to DC Comics ***because*** they explore more characters in their canon.

In order to/for/that

EXAMPLE: Marvel fans watch *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* ***in order to*** expand their knowledge of the Marvel canon.

REVISED: Marvel fans watch *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* ***to*** expand their knowledge of the Marvel canon.
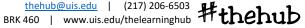
Other common wordy phrases (and their stronger counterparts to adopt in your revisions) include:

Wordy Phrases	Edited Version
I came to the realization that	I realized that
She is of the opinion that	She thinks that
Concerning the matter of	About
During the course of	During
In the event that	If
In the process of	During, while
Regardless of the fact that	Although
For the simple reason that	Because
It is often the case that	Often
I made contact with	I called, wrote
At that point in time	Then
With the exception of	Except
The use of	(can be omitted)
A number of	Some/many

Expletive Constructions

When you use "there is/are" or "it is/are" at the beginning of your sentence, it is weak and wordy, and often unnecessary. These phrases delay the meaning of your sentence, and just end up filling space rather than contributing meaningfully to your reader understanding you. In other words, these phrases direct your reader to the later parts of your sentence when you could just reword it to begin with those parts in the first place.

There is/are

EXAMPLE: **There are** many examples why Marvel is the stronger comic.

REVISED: Many examples support why Marvel is the stronger comic.

It is/are

EXAMPLE: **It is** clear that DC has superior superheroes in its canon.

REVISED: DC has superior superheroes in its canon.

This is/These are

Similarly to expletive constructions, many writers fall into the trap of beginning their sentences with "this is…" or "these are…" These constructions, while helpful because they contextually tie the current sentence directly to the previous sentence, lead to vague referents. Never assume your reader can follow you without significant guidance, and always make sure each of your sentences can stand by itself and make sense.

EXAMPLE: Marvel keeps saying they won't make a *Black Widow* movie. This is why I am considering becoming a DC fan instead.

REVISION: Marvel keeps saying they won't make a *Black Widow* movie. This inconsideration makes me want to become a DC fan instead.

> **NOTE**
> An easy way to fix these constructions so they aren't vague anymore is to ask yourself "This WHAT?" and fill in with your response noun.

I think/I believe

Writing sentences that begin with "I think" or "I believe" also lacks concision. Typically, these can be omitted from your writing, because the fact that you've written the sentence indicates that you think or believe the idea, making "I think" or "I believe" repetitive and unnecessary.

EXAMPLE: I believe that Channing Tatum may not make the best Gambit in the upcoming movie.

REVISION: Channing Tatum may not make the best Gambit in the upcoming movie.

Repetition

Another way to confuse your reader or lose focus on your points is to double up on descriptions or other phrases that convey the idea multiple times. Redundancy or repetition can work well if used purposely, but haphazardly it can make your writing ineffective and boring. Here are two of the most common repetitive phrases and how you can revise them to improve your writing:

Both

To revise 'both' it can usually just be omitted from your sentence.

EXAMPLE: My favorite superheroes are **both** Batman and Iron Man.

REVISION: My favorite superheroes are Batman and Iron Man.

The reason why is because

EXAMPLE: *Man of Steel* and *Batman vs. Superman* disappointed at the box office, and **the reason why is because** people are tired of origin stories.

REVISION: *Man of Steel* and *Batman vs. Superman* disappointed at the box office **because** people are tired of origin stories.

> Other common repetitive phrases (and their stronger counterparts to adopt in your revisions) include:
>
> | Needless Repetition | Edited Version |
> | --- | --- |
> | She was in an elated state of mind. | She was elated. |
> | They are connected together. | They are connected. |
> | They have many traits in common to both. | They share many traits. |
> | The houses are in close proximity. | The houses are nearby. |
> | He has no emotional feelings. | He has no feelings. |
> | Each and every person should come. | Everyone should come. |
> | Round in shape | Round |
> | Tall in stature | Tall |
> | Red in color | Red |
> | Basic Fundamentals | Basics |
> | True fact | True |
> | Very unique | (words like "very" and "really" should be omitted in favor of descriptive adjectives and adverbs) |