

15i What are correct comparisons?

When you write a sentence in which you want to compare two or more things, make sure that no important words are omitted.

NO Individuals driven to achieve make **better** business executives.
[*Better* is a word of comparison (11e), but no comparison is stated.]

YES Individuals driven to achieve make **better** business executives **than do people not interested in personal accomplishments.**

EXERCISE 15-3 Revise this paragraph to create correct elliptical constructions, to complete comparisons, and to insert any missing words. For help, see 15h and 15i.

(1) A giant tsunami is as destructive and even larger than a tidal wave. (2) The word *tsunami* is Japanese for “harbor wave,” for this kind wave appears suddenly in harbor or bay. (3) A tsunami begins with rapid shift in ocean floor caused by an undersea earthquake or volcano. (4) The wave this produces in the open sea is less than three feet high, but it can grow to a height of a hundred feet as it rushes and strikes against the shore. (5) For this reason, tsunamis are much more dangerous to seaside towns than ships on the open sea. (6) In 1960, a tsunami that struck coasts of Chile, Hawaii, and Japan killed total of 590 people. (7) In 2004, a huge tsunami that struck coasts of Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and other countries killed total 275,000 people.

CHAPTER 16**Conciseness****16a** What is conciseness?

Conciseness requires you to craft sentences that are direct and to the point. Its opposite, **wordiness**, means you are filling sentences with empty words and phrases that increase the word count but contribute nothing to meaning. Wordy writing is padded with deadwood, forcing readers to clear away the branches and overgrowth—an annoying waste of time that implies the writer isn’t skilled. Usually, the best time to work on making your writing more concise is while you’re **REVISING**.

WORDY As a matter of fact, ^{T local} the local television station which is situated in the local area wins a great many awards in the final analysis because of its type of coverage of all kinds of controversial issues.

CONCISE The local television station wins many awards for its coverage of controversial issues.

16b What common expressions are not concise?

Many common expressions we use in informal speech are not concise. Box 16-1 lists some and shows you how to eliminate them.

BOX 16-1 SUMMARY



Cutting unnecessary words and phrases

Empty Word or Phrase	Wordy Example	Revised
as a matter of fact	Many marriages, as a matter of fact, end in divorce.	Many marriages end in divorce.
at the present time	The revised proposal for outdoor lighting angers many villagers at the present time?	^{now} The revised proposal for outdoor lighting angers many villagers.
because of the fact that, in light of the fact that, due to the fact that	Because of the fact that the museum has a special exhibit, it stays open late.	Because the museum has a special exhibit, it stays open late.
by means of	We traveled by means of a car.	We traveled by car.
factor	The project's final cost was the essential factor, to consider.	The project's final cost was essential to consider.
for the purpose of	Work crews arrived for the purpose of fixing the potholes.	^{to} Work crews arrived to fix the potholes.
have a tendency to	The team has a tendency to lose home games.	^{tends} The team tends to lose home games. →

Cutting unnecessary words and phrases (*continued*)

in a very real sense	In a very real sense , ^A all firefighters are heroes
in the case of	In the case of ^T the election, it will be close.
in the event that	In the event that ^{I f} you're late, I will buy our tickets.
in the final analysis	In the final analysis , ^N o two eyewitnesses agreed on what they saw.
in the process of	We are in the process of reviewing the proposal.
it seems that	It seems that ^T the union went on strike over health benefits.
manner	The child spoke reluctantly in a reluctant manner . ^{reluctantly.}
nature	The movie review was of a sarcastic, nature .
that exists	The crime rate that exists is unacceptable.
the point I am trying to make	The point I am trying to make is ^T television reporters invade our privacy.
type of, kind of	Gordon took a relaxing type of vacation.
What I mean to say is	What I mean to say is I love you.

EXERCISE 16-1 Working individually or with a group, revise the following sentences in two steps. First, underline all words that interfere with conciseness. Second, revise each sentence to make it more concise. (You'll need to drop words and replace or rearrange others.)

EXAMPLE It seems that most North Americans think of motor scooters as vehicles that exist only in European countries.

It seems that most North Americans think of motor scooters as vehicles that exist only in European countries.

Most North Americans think of motor scooters as only European vehicles.

1. As a matter of fact, in the popular imagination, motor scooters are the very essence of European style.
2. Today, over one million scooters are purchased by people in Europe each year, compared with a number that amounts to only 70,000 buyers in the United States.
3. In fact, Europeans have long used fuel-efficient, clean-running scooters for the purpose of getting around in a manner that is relatively easy in congested cities.
4. The use of these brightly colored, maneuverable scooters allows city dwellers to zip through traffic jams and thereby to save time as well as to save gas.
5. However, sales of scooters, it might interest you to know, are in the process of increasing in North America.

16c What sentence structures usually work against conciseness?

Two sentence structures, although appropriate in some contexts, often work against CONCISENESS because they can lead to WORDINESS: EXPLETIVE constructions and the PASSIVE VOICE.

Avoiding expletive constructions

An expletive construction starts with *it* or *there* followed by a form of the VERB *be*. When you cut the expletive construction and revise, the sentence becomes more direct.

It is necessary for ^s students ^{must} to fill in both questionnaires.

There are ^E eight instructors who teach in the Computer Science Department.

Avoiding the passive voice

In general, the passive voice is less concise—as well as less lively—than the ACTIVE VOICE. In the active voice, the subject of a sentence does the action named by the verb.

Unless your meaning justifies using the passive voice, choose the active voice. (For more information, see 8n through 8p.)

- PASSIVE** Volunteer work was done by students for credit in sociology. [The passive phrase *was done by students* is unnecessary for the intended meaning. *Students*, not *volunteer work*, are doing the action and should get the action of the verb.]
- ACTIVE** **The students did** volunteer work for credit in sociology.
- ACTIVE** **Volunteer work earned** students credit in sociology. [Since the verb has changed to *earned*, *volunteer work* performs the action of the verb.]

16d How else can I revise for conciseness?

Four other techniques can help you achieve CONCISENESS: eliminating unplanned repetition (16d.1); combining sentences (16d.2); shortening CLAUSES (16d.3); and shortening PHRASES and cutting words (16d.4). These techniques involve matters of judgment.

16d.1 Eliminating unplanned repetition

Unplanned repetition lacks conciseness because it delivers the same message more than once, usually in slightly different words. Unplanned repetition, or redundancy, implies that the writer lacks focus and judgment. The opposite, planned repetition, reflects both focus and judgment, as it creates a powerful rhythmic effect; see 18k. As you revise, check that every word is necessary for delivering your message.

- NO** Bringing **the project** to **final completion** three weeks early, the supervisor of **the project** earned our **respectful regard**. [*Completion* implies *bringing to final*; *project* is used twice in one sentence; and *regard* implies *respect*.]
- YES** Completing the project three weeks early, the supervisor earned our respect. [eighteen words reduced to eleven by cutting all redundancies]

16d.2 Combining sentences

Look at sets of sentences in your writing to see if you can fit information contained in one sentence into another sentence. (For more about combining sentences, see Chapter 17, particularly section 17i.)

- TWO SENTENCES** The *Titanic* hit an iceberg and sank. Seventy-three years later, a team of French and American scientists located the ship's resting site.

SENTENCES COMBINED Seventy-three years after the *Titanic* hit an iceberg and sank, a team of French and American scientists located the ship's resting site.

16d.3 Shortening clauses

Look at clauses in your writing to see if you can convey the same information more concisely.

Sometimes you can reduce a clause to a word.

WORDY The scientists held a memorial service for the passengers and crew **who had drowned**.

CONCISE The scientists held a memorial service for the **drowned** passengers and crew.

16d.4 Shortening phrases and cutting words

Sometimes you can reduce a phrase or redundant word pair to a single word. Redundant word pairs include *each and every*, *one and only*, *forever and ever*, *final and conclusive*, *perfectly clear*, *few (or many) in number*, *consensus of opinion*, and *reason . . . is because*.

NO The **consensus of opinion** was that the movie was disappointing.

YES The **consensus** was that the movie was disappointing.

YES **Everyone agreed** that the movie was disappointing.

Sometimes you can rearrange words so that others can be deleted.

WORDY **Objects** found inside the ship included **unbroken** bottles of wine and expensive **undamaged** china.

CONCISE Found **undamaged** inside the ship were bottles of wine and expensive china.

16e How do verbs affect conciseness?

ACTION VERBS are strong verbs. *Be* and *have* are weak verbs that often lead to wordy sentences. When you revise weak verbs to strong ones, you can both increase the impact of your writing and reduce the number of words in your sentences. Strong verbs come into play when you revise your writing to reduce **PHRASES** and to change **NOUNS** to verbs.

WEAK VERB	The plan before the city council has to do with tax rebates.
STRONG VERB	The plan before the city council proposes tax rebates.

Replacing a phrase with a verb

Phrases such as *be aware of*, *be capable of*, *be supportive of* can often be replaced with one-word verbs.

I **envy** [not *am envious of*] your mathematical ability.

I **appreciate** [not *am appreciative of*] your modesty.

Your skill **illustrates** [not *is illustrative of*] how hard you studied.

Revising nouns into verbs

Many nouns are derived from verbs. Such nouns usually end with *-ance*, *-ment*, and *-tion* (*tolerance*, *enforcement*, *narration*). When you turn such wordy nouns back into verbs, your writing is more concise.

NO The **accumulation of** paper lasted thirty years.

YES The paper **accumulated** for thirty years.

CHAPTER 17

Coordination and Subordination

Used well, **coordination** and **subordination** in sentences enhance writing style. These structuring methods reflect the relationships among ideas that a writer seeks to express. Some writers enlist coordination and subordination while they **DRAFT**, but often writers wait until they **REVISE** to check for good opportunities to use these two techniques.

TWO SENTENCES	The sky turned dark gray. The wind died down.
USING COORDINATION	The sky turned dark gray, and the wind died down.