One of the most efficient ways to improve your writing is to edit it for conciseness. You may have been struggling to think ideas through as you wrote—and piled up alternative wordings. Or you may have fallen into the habit of using more words than necessary just to use up space. If you can let your original draft "cool down" a while, you will find it easier to recognize unnecessary words and edit them out. Your reader will thank you! Here are some common patterns of wordiness, with sensible things to do about them.

**Doubling of Words** (INSTEAD, *choose one*):

- e.g., mutual agreement (*agreement*)
- future prospects (*prospects*)
- consensus of opinion (*consensus*)
- reconsider again (*reconsider*)
- whether or not (*whether*)
- inadvertent error (*error*)

**Intensifiers, Qualifiers** (INSTEAD, *omit or give specific details*):

- e.g., very
- really
- extremely
- definitely
- a considerable amount of
- to a certain extent

**Formulaic Phrases** (INSTEAD, *use a one-word form or omit*):

- e.g., for the purpose of (*to*)
- due to the fact that (*because*)
- at this point in time (*now*)
- in the near future (*soon*)
- with regard to (*about*)
- in view of the fact that (*because*)
- as the case may be (*---*)
- Basically, . . . (*---*)

**Catch-all Terms** (INSTEAD, *omit wherever possible*):

- e.g., aspect
- field
- quality
- case
- kind
- situation
- fact
- matter
- sort
- factor
- nature
- thing
- feature
- problem
- type

**WEAK**

A surprising aspect of most labour negotiations is their friendly quality.

**IMPROVED**

Most labour negotiations are surprisingly friendly.

**WEAK**

The fact of the war had the effect of causing many changes.

**IMPROVED**

The war caused many changes. Specifically . . .

**Padded Verbs** (INSTEAD, *use a one-word form*):

- e.g., to have an expectation, hope, wish, understanding, etc.
- (to expect, hope, wish understand, etc.)
- to make an arrangement, plan, decision, inquiry, acquisition, etc.
- (to arrange, plan, decide, inquire, acquire, etc.)
Unnecessary "to be" and "being" (INSTEAD, omit):
WEAK  The program is considered to be effective.
IMPROVED The book is considered effective OR The program is effective.

WEAK  because of the terrain being rough
IMPROVED because of the rough terrain

Passive Verbs (INSTEAD, use active voice, preferably with a personal subject):
WEAK  It is felt that an exercise program should be attempted by this patient before any surgery is performed.
IMPROVED The patient should attempt an exercise program before surgery.
IMPROVED I recommend that the patient attempt an exercise program before surgery.
IMPROVED Mr. Lee, please do these exercises every day for six weeks to strengthen your leg muscles before we try any more surgery.

WEAK  The bevelling jig is said by most users to be faulty.
IMPROVED Most users say the bevelling jig is faulty.

Overuse of Relative Structures ("Who," "Which," "That") (INSTEAD, omit):
WEAK  The novel, which is entitled Ulysses, takes place . . .
IMPROVED The novel Ulysses takes place . . .

WEAK  It was Confucius who said . . .
IMPROVED Confucius said . . .

WEAK  I think that X is the case. . .
IMPROVED X is the case, as this evidence shows: . . .

WEAK  There is a tendency among many writers who may be seen to display certain signs of lack of confidence that their sentences will be overloaded with relative clauses and other words which are generally useless in function.
IMPROVED Many hesitant writers overload their sentences with relative clauses and other useless words.