

## Lesson: Writing Concisely and Precisely

### Learning Target

- Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.

Think of your writing as a machine for communicating ideas. Well-designed machines have exactly as many parts as they need to function properly. In the same way, your writing should contain only precise language that accomplishes what you need it to; it should not contain extra words.

### Writing Concisely

The word **concise** means “expressing much in a few words” or “brief but complete.” Writing that is concise is clear and complete and not wordy. To write concisely,

- Use only the words you need to make your point.
- Avoid using long, difficult words when short, simple ones will do.
- Do not repeat words except when necessary to help your reader understand your point.

You can often delete unnecessary words or word groups, or you can replace clauses with phrases, phrases with words, and long words with shorter words.

**Unnecessary words:** In the future, please turn in assignments on time, **by or on the deadline.**

**Removed unnecessary words:** Please turn in assignments on time.

**Clause:** I finished my math and science homework **while I was in study hall.**

**Replaced with a phrase:** I finished my math and science homework **in study hall.**

**Phrase:** We outlined the letters for the banner **in a careful way.**

**Replaced with a word:** We outlined the letters for the banner **carefully.**

**Long word:** Use a **diminutive** word, please.

**Replaced with a shorter word:** Use a **small** word, please.

There are many wordy expressions that can be replaced with shorter ones:

Wordy Expressions	Concise Expressions
at which time	when
in order to	to
due to the fact that	because
in the event that	if
prior to	before
similar to	like
each and every	each <i>[or every]</i>

## Writing Precisely

The word *precise* means “carefully distinct” or “definitely or exactly stated or defined.” Choose precise words: words that express exactly what you mean.

**Imprecise:** I delivered **all of the building stuff** to the **guy who’s in charge**.

**Precise:** I delivered the **instruction booklets and tools** to the **project leader**.

**Imprecise:** The **fictional book she was talking about to us** is **really very good**.

**Precise:** The **novel she recommended** is **exciting and well-written**.

## Check Your Understanding

Rewrite the following sentences on a separate sheet of paper to make them more concise and precise. (You may need to invent some details to make the language more precise.)

**Answers will vary.** Sample responses are given.

- I have three siblings, who are two brothers and one sister.  
*I have two brothers and one sister.*
- Any and all of the supplies that you have been using for art class should be put away before you depart from the classroom.  
*Your art supplies should be put away before you leave.*  
**OR**  
*You should put away your art supplies before you leave.*
- Carol will be at the bus stop that is located near the part of town called the Arbor Heights neighborhood.  
*Carol will be at the bus stop near Arbor Heights.*
- The icicles that are hanging from the gutter are actually really long.  
*The icicles hanging from the gutter are about fourteen inches long.*
- Robert is wondering if you could possibly expend a few minutes of your time responding to his email messages.  
*Robert is wondering if you could answer his emails.*