

# EDITING FOR CONCISION\*

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First and even second drafts of a paper are often messy, sprawling, and wordy. An essential step in turning a draft into a clean piece of writing is to edit for concision. This means eliminating every word that does not convey meaning. Editing for concision will allow your meaning to emerge clearly.

## 1. Delete words that mean little or nothing

- kind of
- basically
- actually
- practically
- really
- generally

## 2. Delete doubled words

### *Identical meaning*

- Full and complete
- Hope and trust
- Basic and fundamental

### *Close in meaning*

- Explains and argues
- Emphasizes and reiterates
- Clearly and succinctly

## 3. Delete words readers infer

### *Redundant modifiers*

- basic fundamentals
- future plans
- end results
- true facts
- sudden crisis
- free gift
- terrible tragedy

### *Redundant categories*

- large in size
- pink in colour
- round in shape
- field of economics

## 4. Replace a phrase with a word

- carefully read what you have written to improve your wording and catch small errors of spelling, punctuation, and so on.



- edit your work

## 5. Change negatives to affirmatives

- not different ▶ same
- not many ▶ few
- not remember ▶ forget
- not the same ▶ different
- not often ▶
- not allow ▶
- not accept ▶

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\* These five principles are drawn from Joseph Williams' *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990.