Concision

Students often write verbose essays, either to reach a length requirement or to sound “academic.” However, in writing less is often more. Concision emphasizes what’s important – the argument and ideas in your paper. Writing concise papers takes a couple rounds of revision, so start by making your paragraphs more concise, then move on to individual sentences.

Paragraph Level Concision:

1. **Focus on most important points**: Do your sentences support or distract from your main idea?

2. **Delete repetitive sentences**: Ask yourself “Have I already said this?” If yes, then take it out.

3. **Combine sentences**: Strengthen the relationship between ideas and reduce unnecessary words.

4. **Check for circular logic**: A results in B because of A is repetitive and unconvincing.

Wordy paragraph:

There are numerous different ways to rise to the upper echelons of student success, but seeing a writing tutor is a really good place to start. *Some writing tutors are peers while others are older and more experienced,* but no matter what, *they can help you become a better student.* In making a judgment about the success of one writing center, it was shown that the rate of successful course completion increased for students who did not refrain from seeing writing tutor (“Learning & Success”). *This shows that students who work with a writing tutor become better writers because writing tutors work with students on their writing skills.* What’s interesting is that the courses were successfully completed and were not limited to only writing classes. *They included other subjects as well. The fact that course completion increased in many different subjects shows that seeing a writing tutor helps students become better writers as well as better students.*

Works Cited


More concise paragraph revision:

There are numerous different ways to rise to the upper echelons of student success, but seeing a writing tutor is a really good place to start. In making a judgment about the success of one writing center, it was shown that the rate of successful course completion increased for students who did not refrain from seeing a writing tutor (“Learning & Success”). What’s interesting is that the courses were successfully completed and were not limited to only writing classes. *They included other subjects as well, which shows that seeing a writing tutor helps students become better writers as well as better students.*
Sentence Level Concision:

1. Delete meaningless words: Adverbs and adjectives are often unnecessary to convey meaning.
   … seeing a writing tutor is a really good place to start.

2. Replace lengthy phrases with specific words: Is there a one word synonym for longer phrases?
   In making a judgment about the success of one writing center…
   In an assessment of one writing center…

3. Delete repetitive words: Do your words have the same meaning or imply each other?
   There are numerous different ways…
   There are different ways…

4. Change negatives to positives: Using positive phrases and antonyms instead of negative adjectives (not clean → dirty) is clearer and more concise.
   …who did not refrain from seeing a writing tutor
   …who saw a writing tutor

5. Use free modifiers: Past participles (“-ed” verb forms) or present participles (“-ing” verb form) that modify the subject of a sentence can help you concisely include multiple verb phrases.
   What’s interesting is that the courses were successfully completed and were not limited to only writing classes.
   What’s interesting is that the successfully completed courses were not limited to only writing classes.

6. Use active instead of passive:
   In an assessment of one writing center, it was shown that…
   An assessment of one writing center showed that…

7. Avoid unnecessary complex language: Academic language doesn’t need to be overly complex or pompous, but it does need to be clear.
   …ways to rise to the upper echelons of student success…
   …ways to become a successful student…