**Conciseness (adapted from the OWL at Purdue)**

The goal of concise writing is to use the most effective words. Concise writing does not always have the fewest words, but it always uses the strongest ones. Writers often fill sentences with weak or unnecessary words that can be deleted or replaced. **Like bad employees, words that don't accomplish enough should be fired.** When only the most effective words remain, writing will be far more concise and readable.

**1. Replace several vague words with more powerful and specific words.**

Often, writers use several small and ambiguous words to express a concept, wasting energy expressing ideas better relayed through fewer specific words. As a general rule, more specific words lead to more concise writingNotice that the examples below actually convey more as they drop in word count.

**Wordy**: The politician talked **about several of the merits of** after-school programs in his speech (14 words)

**Concise**: The politician **touted** after-school programs in his speech. (8 words)

**Wordy**: Our website **has made available many of the things you can use** **for making a decision on** the best dentist. (20 words)

**Concise**: Our website **presents** **criteria** **for determining** the best dentist. (9 words)

**Wordy**: Working as a **pupil under someone who develops photos** was an experience **that really helped me learn a lot**. (20 words)

**Concise**: Working as a **photo technician's apprentice** was an **educational** experience. (10 words)

**2. Interrogate every word in a sentence**

Check every word to make sure that it is providing something important and unique to a sentence. If words are dead weight, they can be deleted or replaced. Other sections in this handout cover this concept more specifically, but there are some general examples below containing sentences with words that could be cut.

**Wordy**: Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band of musicians together in 1969, giving it the ironic name of Blind Faith because early speculation that was spreading everywhere about the band suggested that the new musical group would be good enough to rival the earlier bands that both men had been in, Cream and Traffic, which people had really liked and had been very popular. (66 words)

**Concise**: Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band in 1969, ironically naming it Blind Faith because speculation suggested that the group would rival the musicians’ previous popular bands, Cream and Traffic. (32 words)

**Wordy**: Many have made the wise observation that when a stone is in motion rolling down a hill or incline that that moving stone is not as likely to be covered all over with the kind of thick green moss that grows on stationary unmoving things and becomes a nuisance and suggests that those things haven’t moved in a long time and probably won’t move any time soon. (67 words)

**Concise**: A rolling stone gathers no moss. (6 words)

**The Paramedic Method**

1. Circle the prepositions (of, in, about, for, onto, into)
2. Draw a box around the "is" verb forms
3. Ask, "Where's the action?"
4. Change the "action" into a simple verb
5. Move the doer into the subject (Who's kicking whom)
6. Eliminate any unnecessary slow wind-ups
7. Eliminate any redundancies.



**Image Caption: Paramedic Method Example**

Use the Paramedic Method in the sentences below to practice making your sentences more concise. After you use the Paramedic Method on these sentences, check your results against the sentences at the bottom of this handout.

1. The point I wish to make is that the employees working at this company are in need of a much better manager of their money.
2. It is widely known that the engineers at Sandia Labs have become active participants in the Search and Rescue operations in most years.
3. After reviewing the results of your previous research, and in light of the relevant information found within the context of the study, there is ample evidence for making important, significant changes to our operating procedures.

**A Concise Solution to the Example:**

1. Employees at this company need a better money manager. (Original word count: 26. New word count: 10).
2. In recent years, engineers at Sandia Labs have participated in the Search and Rescue operations. (Original word count: 24. New word count: 16).
3. After reviewing the results of your research, and within the context of the study, we find evidence supporting significant changes in our operating procedures. (Original word count: 36. New word count: 25).

*This method adapted from a larger piece by Richard Johnson-Sheehan.*