![Douglas Learning Centre logo]

Recognizing Wordiness

This resource will help you recognize language that can be made more concise in your writing.

Concise writing expresses ideas without unnecessary wordiness and makes your writing easier to understand. During your revising stages of your paper, take some time to edit specifically for wordiness.

Notice the difference between each of the following pairs of sentences. What makes the first version of each pair wordy?

Despite the fact that she was not feeling well, she came to the conclusion that she would go to work anyway.	*Despite feeling unwell, she decided to go to work.*
In my opinion, I think that the study of Sociology is very fascinating.	*Sociology is fascinating.*

Use of vague words instead of precise words

When she talked to him, she used a loud angry voice.	*She yelled at him.*
The crime wave cost people a lot of money.	*The crime wave was costly.*

Use of long expressions instead of individual words

to come to the conclusion that	*to decide*
to put forward the idea that	*to suggest*

Over-use of passive verbs

The criminal was caught by the police and convicted by the court.	*The police caught the criminal and the court convicted him.*

Over-use of prepositional phrases

(for example phrases that begin with words like in, at, on, with..)

In Edmonton in Alberta at 11:00 p.m. in the evening on the first of June, the northern lights gave a wonderful show to residents.	*The Northern Lights gave Edmontonians a wonderful June 1st late night show.*

Over-use of "it" and "there" as meaningless subjects

It was exciting to go to the New Year celebrations.	*The New Year celebrations were exciting.*
There were thirty-four people waiting for the mayor.	*Thirty-four people waited for the mayor.*

Using longer clauses instead of shorter phrases

After she had baked the bread, she cleaned the kitchen.	*After baking the bread, she cleaned the kitchen.*