

CHAPTER 6

‘ Being concise ’

Task 1: Look at the pairs of sentences below. Does the rewritten, shorter version have the same meaning as the first, wordier version?

- 1a. A lot of research has been conducted to test the phenomenon of visual illusions, with results suggesting that horizontal stripes actually make a human figure look slimmer, contradicting the common assumption that vertical stripes make people look slimmer than they really are (Helmholtz, 1987; Thompson and Mikellidou, 2011). **42 words**
- 1b. Results from several studies have suggested that horizontal stripes make a human figure look slimmer, contradicting the common assumption that it is vertical stripes that achieve this (Helmholtz, 1987; Thompson and Mikellidou, 2011). **27 words**

This is accurate and clear, and gives the same information as the original in a more concise way.

- 2a. Also if this experiment was done again other methods could be tried out with to find a better method to estimate protein concentration such as the Lowry method, as it is a very widely used method and is seen as an acceptable alternative to absolute determination of concentration and is also a biuret method, so is still an optical method (Waterborg, 2009). **58 words**
- 2b. Future experiments could use other methods, such as the Lowry method (also an optical method), which is better at estimating protein concentration and is seen as an acceptable alternative to absolute determination of concentration (Waterborg, 2009). **34 words**

This is much more concise but is *not* an accurate edited version. The meaning has changed to say that other optical methods *are* better. The original suggests it *is* ‘acceptable’ but does not say it is better.

**Task 2: Rewrite each sentence to be more formal and more concise.
We have suggested a target number of words you should aim for.**

Possible answers

1. Some residue remained after mixing. (5)
2. In addition, ultraviolet radiation (UVR) can cause sunburn and increase the risk of skin cancer. (15)
3. The legalisation and spread of Christianity within the Roman Empire increased internal tensions and helped to create circumstances in which the assassination of emperors became a viable option. (28)
4. While economic growth can often reduce levels of unemployment slightly, the belief that it is a means for more jobs to be created could be considered a contradiction. (28)

It could be reduced further: While economic growth can often slightly reduce levels of unemployment, the belief that it is a means for increased job creation could be considered a contradiction. (25)

Task 3: Identify the words and phrases that can be cut from the following extract from a psychology lab report.

Suggestions for deletions and edits

~~There have been~~ a number of studies ~~which~~ have established that men obtain significantly higher scores on the WAIS than women. However, each ~~of the~~ sub-tests has separate ~~individual~~ results. In the standardisation sample for the WAIS, men obtain higher scores on information, picture completion, arithmetic and block design. Women score better than men on similarities, digit symbol and vocabulary with ~~exactly~~ the same average scores on the rest of the WAIS subtests.

Previous studies have shown that on Raven's matrices, men do not outperform ~~better than~~ women, ~~on the whole~~ **overall**. Lynn et al, 2004, have shown that the Raven's matrices may measure at least three factors (perceptual, verbal analytic and visuospatial). ~~It is worth noting that~~ Raven's matrices do not test general intelligence, and it is on some of these factors that men outperform women ~~due to the fact that~~ **because** males and females have differently structured brains which they use in ~~very~~ different ways (Mackintosh and Bennett, 2005).

Clear version

A number of studies have established that men obtain significantly higher scores on the WAIS than women. However, each sub-test has separate results. In the standardisation sample for the WAIS, men obtain higher scores on information, picture completion, arithmetic and block design. Women score better than men on similarities, digit symbol and vocabulary with the same average scores on the rest of the WAIS subtests.

Previous studies have shown that on Raven's matrices, men do not outperform women, **overall**. Lynn et al, 2004, have shown that the Raven's matrices may measure at least three factors (perceptual, verbal analytic and visuospatial). Raven's matrices do not test general intelligence, and it is on some of these factors that men outperform women **because** males and females have differently structured brains which they use in different ways (Mackintosh and Bennett, 2005). (137 words including references)

Task 4: Make these sentences containing relative clauses more concise.

More concise versions

1. The policies ~~which~~ related to health and education are considered to have been a success.
2. Electricity can be produced from heat ~~which is~~ emitted from industrial processes.
3. The patients ~~who were~~ taking the placebo showed no difference in their fitness levels at the end of the experiment.
4. Twenty ~~participants who were~~ regular sports players were studied over a period of ten weeks.

Task 5: Rewrite the following sentences using brackets to make the message more concise.

1. There are two conditions (stability within the cartel organisation and the potential for monopoly power) which need to be met for cartel success.
2. Most recently the post-processualist school of thought has emerged (also known as interpretive archaeologies) which claims that we will never be able to understand the reasons for increasing social complexity, as much of human behaviour is illogical and the role of the individual is not necessarily represented in the archaeological record (Hodder, 1986).
3. Qualitatively, the results closely match the theory (that a linear relationship between applied load and deflection exists).
4. The fact that Hagelin did not appear to be acting out of greed (he asked very little for the service he was providing) must be weighed against Hagelin's violations of his engineer's principles.

Task 6: Edit the extract from an essay on economic growth to make it more concise. How many words can you reduce it to, taking care to *maintain the same meaning*?

Improved, more concise version

It is generally believed that the richer a country, the greater the number of jobs available and the greater the rates of employment. However, this belief is a contradiction. To maximise economic growth, productivity needs to be as high as possible, with the lowest possible input and production costs. Companies need to become streamlined, reducing staff numbers, and reducing the quantity of resources needed to make the same volume of product. More enhanced and mechanised labour leads to smaller production costs to product ratio. **84 words**