

Conciseness

Last modified: 2026-07-29 20:07:53 (UTC)

AI-Assisted Authorship

This chapter was written with the assistance of GitHub Copilot, which expanded on outlined ideas and draft notes provided by the author. The content represents the author's perspective and has been reviewed for accuracy, but the detailed prose was generated through AI assistance.

Concise writing conveys ideas efficiently, using only the words necessary to communicate meaning clearly. Every word should serve a purpose. Eliminate redundancy and verbosity. When you can express an idea in fewer words without losing meaning, do so.

Common ways to improve conciseness

- Remove redundant phrases
 - “in order to” → “to”
 - “due to the fact that” → “because”
 - “at this point in time” → “now”
 - “a large number of” → “many”
- Use active voice instead of passive where appropriate
 - “The experiment was conducted by the researchers” → “The researchers conducted the experiment”
- Eliminate unnecessary qualifiers
 - “very”, “really”, “quite” often add little meaning
- Replace wordy phrases with single words
 - “make a decision” → “decide”
 - “give consideration to” → “consider”

– “is able to” → “can”

Remember: concise writing is not about making every sentence as short as possible, but about removing words that do not contribute to meaning or clarity.

Limit complex sentence structures

A sentence with several nested dependent clauses forces the reader to hold each unfinished clause in mind until the sentence finally resolves. Compound sentences joined by coordinating conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *or*) are usually fine, and an occasional dependent clause is fine too; the problem is piling several of them into a single sentence.

When a sentence becomes hard to follow, split it into shorter sentences, each carrying one main idea.

Example 0.1 (Splitting an over-nested sentence).

Because the assay, which we had validated the previous year using samples that were collected before the outbreak began, produced results that, although noisy, were consistent with prior reports, we proceeded with the analysis.

We had validated the assay the previous year, using samples collected before the outbreak began. Its results were noisy but consistent with prior reports, so we proceeded with the analysis.

The revised version breaks one deeply nested sentence into two and restores the natural chronological order (validation, then results, then decision), so the reader can absorb each idea before moving on.

Examples of concise writing

Many effective writers throughout history have exemplified the principle of conciseness.

Julius Caesar’s *Commentarii* and phrases like “Veni, vidi, vici” demonstrate the power of brevity (Wikipedia contributors 2026b).

Ernest Hemingway was known for his spare, direct prose style. His short sentences and simple words conveyed complex ideas and emotions without unnecessary embellishment (Wikipedia contributors 2026a).

Wikipedia contributors. 2026a. *Ernest Hemingway* — *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Hemingway#Writing_style.

Wikipedia contributors. 2026b. *Julius Caesar* — *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar#Literary_works.