

Don't Let Excessive Words Obscure Meaning

A good engineer would not design equipment with unnecessary parts. Why would that same engineer produce a document with lots of unnecessary words? Similar to that unnecessary part, the unnecessary word may cause some confusion for the user (reader). In technical writing, it is always a good rule to choose the fewest number of words that express the desired thought. Too often, we are tempted to stretch out a sentence with words that really don't contribute to the meaning of that is being conveyed.

Examples. The “wordy” phrases below *are not incorrect* constructions, but better technical writers will usually replace them with more concise wording.

Wordy	More Concise	Wordy	More Concise
A large number of	many	in the event that	if
Along the lines of	like	in the form of	as
As a general rule	generally	in the majority of cases	generally, usually
As a result of	because	in the near future	soon, on [date]
At all times	always	in the vicinity of	near
At the conclusion of	after	in view of the fact that	since, because
At the present time	now	it is clear that	clearly (or omit)
At your earliest convenience	soon, now	it is found (recognized) that	(omit)
Be considered as	is	it is interesting to note that	(omit)
By means of	by	it may be seen (noted) that	(omit)
Before long	soon	I would appreciate it if	please
Come in contact with	meet	of great importance	important
Drilling (sampling) activities	drilling (sampling)	on a daily (a weekly, an annual) basis	daily (weekly, annually, yearly)
During (in) the course of	during, while	on condition that	if
Hold a meeting	meet	prior to	before
In case	if	subsequent to	after
In lieu of	instead	the fact that	(omit)
In many cases	often	the reason why is that	because
In order to	to	there is no doubt but that	no doubt, doubtless
In regard to	about	this is a subject that	this subject
Insofar as, inasmuch as	because, since, as	until such time as	until
In some (other) cases	sometimes	what is known as	(omit)
In spite of (despite) the fact that	although, even though	with the exception of	except

Redundancies and Inappropriate Comparatives

Similar to the wordy examples above, some words incorporate meanings that do not need to be repeated or reinforced by modifiers. Since engineers seek exactness in computations and specifications, it would seem inappropriate to use comparative modifiers (e.g., *more* or *less*) with *unique* and several other absolute terms.

Examples. Replace the redundant expressions below with the more appropriate term.

Redundancy	Use Instead
absolutely essential	essential
absolutely perfect	perfect
actual experience	experience
add together	add
advance plan	plan
any and all	any
basic (main) essentials	essentials
by means of	by
continue on	continue
cubic yards in volume	cubic yards
current status	status
final outcome	outcome
first priority	priority
in close proximity	close
joined together	joined
mixed together	mixed
new innovations	innovations
past history	history
personal opinion	opinion
physical size	size
point in time	time
reason why	reason
refer back to	refer to
repeat again	repeat
small (large) in size	small (large)
square feet in area	square feet
take action	act
square (triangular, round) in shape	square (triangular, round)
whether or not	whether