# Concise writing cheat sheet

No one wants to read extra words when they don’t add information or meaning. Writing concisely can improve readability, and save reading time.

## 3 ways to be concise

Writing concisely requires attention to three things:

1. Only including what’s necessary. If you plan before you start writing you’ll know what you need to say and what your audience needs to know. Don’t include trivial, irrelevant information.
2. Not repeating anything.
3. Editing ruthlessly, watching out for wordy writing habits.

## 4 wordy writing problems

Here are some examples. The word in brackets can be removed when you’re editing.

### Meaningless modifiers or qualifiers

Avoid adding words thinking they'll add meaning or clarity when they don't.

* (end) result
* (brief) summary
* (completely) destroyed
* continue (on)
* (past) history
* plan (ahead)

### Redundant categories

Avoid including words that spell out the category of a word when it's already obvious.

* brief (in duration)
* consensus (of opinion)
* free (of charge)
* (the month of) December
* (the state of) Victoria
* (period of) 3 weeks

### Paired words

Avoid using a pair of words when they have roughly the same meaning.

* (each and) every
* first (and foremost)
* (full and) complete
* fees (and charges)
* cease (and desist)
* various (and sundry)

### Wordy phrases

Avoid phrasing that includes extra words that aren’t doing any extra work.

* (in order) to
* is (located) at
* during (the course of)
* until (such time as)
* owing to (the fact that)
* (both) x and y

## Examples

| Avoid this | Try this instead |
| --- | --- |
| A considerable amount of | Many, a lot |
| Acquainted yourself with | Read, learn about |
| Added bonus | Bonus, extra |
| Advance planning | Planning |
| Advance warning | Warning |
| A large number of | Many |
| Along the lines of | Like |
| A majority of | Most, many |
| A number of | Some, many |
| Any and all | All |
| As a consequence of | Because |
| As a matter of fact | In fact or DELETE |
| As a means to | To |
| As of the date of | From |
| Assess whether | Work out, see if |
| At all times | Always |
| At an early date | Soon |
| At first glance | First or DELETE |
| At the present time | Now |
| At the same time that | While |
| At this point in time | Now |
| Basic and fundamental | Basic |
| Basic fundamentals | Basics |
| Basic necessity | Basics, needs |
| Because of the fact that | Because |
| Both of these, both of them | Both |
| Both [x] and [y] | [x] and [y] |
| Brings to mind | Reminds, suggests |
| By definition means | Means |
| By means of | By |
| By the use of | Using |
| By virtue of | By |
| Came to a realisation | Realised |
| Can be seen as | Is or DELETE |
| Cheap in quality | Cheap |
| Cease and desist | Stop |
| Circumstances in which | When or where |
| Compare and contrast | Compare |
| Complete failure | Failure, failed |
| Complete stranger | Stranger |
| Concerning the matter of | About |
| Despite the fact that | Although |
| Did not succeed | Failed |
| Due to the effects | Because |
| Due to the fact that | Because |
| During the course of | During, while |
| Each and every | Each, all, every |
| Each individual | Everyone, all |
| Early on in the | Early in the |
| End result | End, result |
| Excessive number of | Too many |
| Extreme in degree | Extreme |
| Final conclusion | Conclusion |
| Final result | Result |
| First and foremost | First |
| For all intents and purposes | Actually or DELETE |
| For that which is | For the |
| For the duration of | While, during |
| For the purpose of | For |
| For the purpose of doing | To do |
| Free of charge | Free |
| Full and complete | Full |
| Future plans | Plans |
| Gather together | Gather |
| General public | Public |
| Has a negative impact | Hurts, harms |
| Has (had or have) been found to | Is, was, are |
| Has (had or have) the ability to (capacity for) | Can, could |
| Has (had or have) the opportunity to | Can, could |
| I myself | I |
| In a case in which | When, where |
| In accordance with | By |
| In actual fact | In fact, actually |
| In a situation in which | In, when, where |
| In all likelihood (probability) | Likely, probably |
| In close proximity | Close, near |
| In connection with | About |
| In light of the fact that | Because |
| Inner feelings | Feelings |
| In order to | To |
| In reference to | About |
| In the course of | While, during |
| In the event that | If |
| In the final analysis | Finally |
| In the light of | Considering, because |
| In the majority of cases (instances) | Most |
| In the midst of (middle of) | During, while |
| In the near future (not too distant future) | Soon |
| In the neighbourhood of | About, around |
| In this day and age | Now, currently, today |
| In view of the fact that | Because |
| Is able to | Can |
| Is aware of the fact that | Knows |
| Is found to be | Is |
| Is going to | Will |
| Is in conflict with | Contradicts, is against |
| Is in contrast with | Compared with, contrasts with |
| Is of significant importance | Is important |
| Is located at | Is at |
| It can be seen that | So or DELETE |
| It could happen that | Could, may, might |
| It has to be remembered | Remember |
| It is apparent (clear) that | Clearly |
| It is necessary that | Must |
| Join together | Join |
| Last but not least | Finally |
| Later on | Later |
| Make a decision | Decide |
| Make contact with | Contact |
| Make reference to | Refer to |
| Manner in which | Way |
| Mental attitude | Attitude, opinion, view |
| Mix together | Mix |
| More preferable | Preferable |
| Mutual agreement | Agreement |
| Natural instinct | Instinct |
| Necessary prerequisite | Prerequisite (needed) |
| New initiative | New, initiative |
| Of great importance | Important |
| Of the opinion | Think, believe |
| On account of (the fact that) | Because |
| On a daily basis | Daily |
| On the basis of | Because, based on |
| On the grounds that | Because |
| On the occasion of | On |
| On the whole | Overall or DELETE |
| On top of all this | And then or DELETE |
| On two different occasions | Twice |
| Overall goal | Goal |
| Overall structure | Structure |
| Owing to the fact that | Because |
| Past experience | Experience |
| Past history | History |
| Past memories | Memories |
| Period of time | Period, time |
| Pink in colour | Pink |
| Plan ahead | Plan |
| Prior to (Previous to) | Before |
| Providing that | If |
| Real truth | Truth |
| Reconsider again | Reconsider |
| Regardless of the fact that | Although |
| The majority of | Most |
| The month of November | November |
| The reason why | Reason, because |
| There is a chance that | It may, might, could |
| Throughout the course of | During, while |
| Totally obvious | Obvious |
| True facts | Facts |
| Until such time as | Until |
| Was aware | Knew |
| Whether or not | Whether, if |
| Which have been found to be | Are |
| With regard to | About, regarding |
| With the exception of | Except for |
| Witnessed first hand | Witnessed, saw |