Writing Concisely
Wednesday, May 4 @ 7 pm ET
Presenter – Julie Freydlin
Kaplan University Writing Center

Please click here to view this recorded workshop:
http://khe2.adobeconnect.com/p7nurmwoksu/
Writing Workshop Goals

Today’s workshop will focus on the following goals:

• Discuss why brevity is important for writers and their audience
• Review the Paramedic Method
• Practice revising sentences
The Paramedic Method

• **Paramedic Revision** is a sentence level revision strategy that helps to make writing more clear and concise.
• It revives tired, wordy, and awkward sentences and makes them more readable.

The Paramedic Method

Richard Lanham created the Paramedic Method of revision. **Paramedic Revision** is a sentence level revision strategy that helps to make writing more clear and concise. This technique focuses on revising sentences to make tired, wordy, or awkward sentences more readable.
Identify “to be” and “to have” verb forms

“These are not action words. Try to replace them with lively, more active verbs.

Example:
The boy was bad when his mother was away from the house.

Challenge: Rewrite the sentence omitting the two “was” words.

Revision: The boy misbehaved during his mother’s absence.

Identify “to be” and “to have” verb forms

“To be” and “to have” verb forms should also be eliminated whenever possible; they are not action words. Use more interesting action verbs.

How could this sentence be revised and both “was” verbs omitted: The boy was bad when his mother was away from the house.

Possible solution: The boy misbehaved during his mother’s absence.
Omit expletives and repetitions

Example: There are twenty-five students who have already expressed a desire to attend the program next summer.

Challenge: Omit “there are” and “who have”.

Revision: Twenty-five students have already expressed a desire to attend next summer’s program.
Avoid passive voice

Another recommendation is to eliminate passive voice constructions. These occur when the sentence’s subject is being acted upon instead of doing the acting.

**Example**: The tests were graded by the teacher. (The teacher is actually the subject and should be mentioned first.)

**Challenge**: Make “teacher” the subject of the sentence.

**Revision**: The teacher graded the tests.

For more examples, go to the Kaplan WC and see this Passive Voice resource.
Additional Steps

• Make sure sentence lengths vary. You don’t want too many very long or very short sentences.
• Make sure all pronouns (it, they, everyone, etc.) have a clear reference.
• Try to limit the use of pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that*.

Additional tips include varying sentence lengths, making sure pronouns have a clear reference, and limiting relative pronoun use (*who*, *which*, *that*)
Additional Steps, cont’d.

- Limit the use of "qualifier" words like really, every, very.
- Take out clichés (children are our future, etc.)
- These steps are detailed in *The Kaplan Guide to Successful Writing* (pp. 196-204).

Additional Steps, cont’d
Also limit the use of qualifying adverbs (really, every, very), and eliminate clichés.
These steps are detailed in *The Kaplan Guide to Successful Writing* (pp. 196-204).
Examples

- **Vary sentence length:**
  
  Original: She enjoyed swimming. She liked running, too. She occasionally went biking. So, she entered a triathlon. She liked the competition. However, the combination proved difficult.
  
  Revision: Since she enjoyed swimming, running, and biking, she entered a triathlon. While she relished the competition, juggling the activities overwhelmed her.

- **Make sure pronouns have a clear reference:**
  
  Original: Boyd vacationed in Jamaica, and they had a good time.
  
  Revision: Boyd vacationed in Jamaica, and he and his friend had a good time.
Examples

**Omit redundancies:**
At this point in time, we need to revise our papers.
Revision: Now we need to revise our papers.

**Avoid overused modifiers:** (words like “very,” “really”)
Carla was very tired and really hungry by the time she got home.
Revision: Carla was exhausted and famished by the time she got home.
Let’s Practice

In order to find a friend of whom one can speak well, one must be a friend of whom one can speak highly.
Revision: In order to find a good friend, one must be a good friend.

He has a lot of friends, but doesn’t know in this day and age which ones are most worthy of his trust.
Revision: He doesn’t know which of his many friends are trustworthy.

If Julia does not keep her job, it will be due to the fact that she has not arrived on time every single day.
Revision: If Julia gets fired, it’s because she is always late.

Jerome is a writer who has plenty of ideas and not enough time in his daily activity to allow him to write.
Revision: Jerome has many writing ideas but not enough time.

Protecting our children while they research on the internet is an activity which can take a lot of time and research to achieve.
Revision: Protecting our children while they research on the internet is time consuming.

Let’s Practice Eliminating Wordiness

- In order to find a friend of whom one can speak well, one must be a friend of whom one can speak highly.
- He has a lot of friends, but doesn’t know in this day and age which ones are most worthy of his trust.
- If Julia does not keep her job, it will be due to the fact that she has not arrived on time every single day.
- Jerome is a writer who has plenty of ideas and not enough time in his daily activity to allow him to write.
- Protecting our children while they research on the internet is an activity which can take a lot of time and research to achieve.
Let’s Practice Eliminating Repetition

Sunshine helps people overcome depression. Research has shown that sunshine activates a chemical, called ABC, inside the brain. Once the chemical is activated, blood flow to the brain increases, and the person feels more alert. This triggers a chain reaction. First, the person seeks a constructive activity to which to channel his energy. He looks around for something to do. Having found this, he applies himself to overcoming obstacles until he achieves the desired result. The challenges might be difficult, but the person does not give up (Smith, 2011). In the end, it’s the sunshine that keeps a person going through difficulty.

Let’s Practice Eliminating Repetition

Can you spot the repetition in this paragraph?
Sunshine helps people overcome depression. Research has shown that sunshine activates a chemical, called ABC, inside the brain. Once the chemical is activated, blood flow to the brain increases, and the person feels more alert. This triggers a chain reaction. First, the person seeks a constructive activity to which to channel his energy. He looks around for something to do. Having found this, he applies himself to overcoming obstacles until he achieves the desired result. The challenges might be difficult, but the person does not give up (Smith, 2011). In the end, it’s the sunshine that keeps a person going through difficulty.
Let’s Practice Eliminating Repetition (cont.)

Here is the same paragraph without repetition:
Sunshine helps people overcome depression by activating a chemical, called ABC, inside the brain. This increases blood flow to the brain, and the person feels more alert, which sets off a chain reaction. First, the person seeks a constructive activity to which to channel his energy. Having found this, he applies himself to overcoming obstacles until he achieves the desired result (Smith, 2011). In the end, it’s the sunshine that keeps a person going through difficulty.
References

Writing Center Resources

- Understanding Tone and Voice
- Formal vs. Informal Writing
- Standard American English and Writing
- Honing Word Choice
Questions?
Connect with the KUWC’s public webpage. You can actually Google and find this page. This is also a great way for you to stay connected to the KUWC through Facebook and Twitter. Many of our resources are here as well.
Come visit us. We can be found under the My Studies tab, then under Academic Support Center.
On the main Academic Support Center page, you will see the Writing Center links. These include Live Tutoring, Paper Review Service, the Writing Reference Library, Citation Guidelines, Workshops, English Language Learner, and Fundamental writing help. Notice, you can access the Kaplan Guide to Successful Writing on the right hand side in both print and audio form.
The best time to do a paper review in the Kaplan University Writing Center is after you have written your first draft. When you come to us early, we can help you the most by helping you with the structure of your paper. Many students send papers at the last minute because they want us to simply proofread their paper. However, KUWC writing tutors do not simply proofread
the paper for you; we want to help you learn to write and proofread your own papers. You can submit a first draft, and then submit a later draft if you need further help on an assignment.

If you need help before you write the first draft, you can use live tutoring. During live tutoring, you can ask questions and brainstorm with a tutor. Live tutors can help you with other stages in the paper writing process as well.
Contact Information

Julie Freydlin, Tutor
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Write us at kuwc@kaplan.edu!

Workshops are recorded and recording links, with an accompanying PowerPoint, are posted on the Writing Center Workshops page after the workshop.

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