



Avoiding Redundancy

Redundancy distracts and annoys readers because it adds unnecessary length to a document. Eliminating both local and global redundancy will help you make your point in fewer words.

Local redundancy

Local redundancy takes the form of unnecessary words or phrases. For example:

Evil villains

Dead corpses

Added bonus

Aren't all villains evil? Aren't all corpses dead? Aren't all bonuses added? Writers need not use both words to convey their meaning. While these examples seem obvious, local redundancy occurs very often in academic writing, particularly when writers attempt to "fluff up" their writing with big words and added length. For example, read the following sentence:

At this point in time, it now becomes necessary for us to consider alternatives for the purposes of our goals.

Redundancy makes this sentence wordy and unclear—several words can be deleted without affecting the meaning of the sentence. For instance, *at this point of time* and *now* mean the same thing; *for the purposes of our goals* does nothing for the sentence and can be eliminated without changing the sentence's meaning—after all, are not all alternatives considered for the purposes of one's goals? The writer could also make the subject *we* in order to eliminate the need for *for us*; similarly, *becomes necessary* could be replaced with *need*.

This sentence can thus be shortened to a clearer, easier-to-read sentence, all without changing its meaning: *We now need to consider alternatives.*

Global redundancy

Global redundancy occurs when writers repeat themselves throughout the paper. For example, a writer may continuously bring up the same point over and over. While repetition can sometimes be effective, unnecessary repetition will quickly annoy readers and cause them to lose interest. Instead, keep your readers interested by constantly giving them new words and new ideas to consider.

Eliminate global redundancy by reading your writing slowly and carefully and asking yourself:

- Have I already said this somewhere earlier in my paper? If so, do I need to repeat it?
- Do my readers really need to know this in order to understand my meaning? If you find yourself doubting whether something is necessary, the answer is probably *no*.
- Could I rephrase a point in fresh, new language *or* say the same thing in a different way?

If possible, have someone else read your writing and pose the above questions to them. Then, use this reader's feedback to revise your work for concision.