

**Advanced 3**  
**Language Focus 3**  
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## **Avoiding Wordiness**

**Verbosity**, or verbosity, is speech or writing that uses more words than necessary. The opposite of verbosity is “plain language”.

Some teachers, including the author of *The Elements of Style*, warn against verbosity. Similarly, Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway, among others, famously avoided it.

Synonyms of "verbosity" include wordiness, verbiage, prolixity, and grandiloquence.

**Wordiness** (noun) = the quality of containing too many words

*Smith learned to write more crisply under his editor, who didn't tolerate wordiness.*

*The wordiness of the script makes the first half of the film feel like an adapted stage play.*

*The repetition and wordiness in the book don't make it an easy read.*

*O'Neill is famous for his wordiness, repetition and the complexity of his characters.*

*My wordiness reflects my exhaustion, too tired to edit.*

**Wordy** (adjective) = containing too many words

*As usual she gave a reply which was wordy and didn't answer the question.*

**Verbose** (adjective) = using or containing more words than are necessary

*a verbose explanation/report/speech/style*

*He was a notoriously verbose after-dinner speaker.*

**Verbosity** (noun) = the quality of being verbose (= using too many words)

*Knowing they wouldn't welcome too much verbosity, he simplified his talk.*

*The message is clear and concise and displays no verbosity.*

**Grandiloquence** /græn'dil.ə.kwəns/ = a style or manner of speaking that uses complicated language in order to attract admiration and attention, especially in order to make someone or something seem important

*His grandiloquence was a powerful weapon that he used to overcome rivals and enemies.*

*He has not lost the grandiloquence that adds drama to just about everything that comes out of his mouth.*

**Verbiage** = language that is very complicated and contains a lot of unnecessary words

*His explanation was wrapped up in so much technical verbiage that I couldn't understand it.*

**Prolixity** /prə'liks.sə.ti/ = the fact of using too many words and therefore being boring or difficult to read or listen to

*Despite all its absurd prolixity, this is one of the great books in the English language.*

**Point:**

We are generally expected to avoid wordiness, and our language needs to be straightforward. It is not acceptable for a sentence to contain too many words and not much meaning.

Some people use wordiness as a method to hide their lack of knowledge in a particular area: They don't know the answer to a particular question, but they provide a meaningless long answer.

Don't forget the purpose of human language is communication. Wordiness prevents other people from understanding what you have on your mind and causes language to malfunction.

**How to avoid verbosity**

1. **Use active verbs:** Make the subject of a sentence do something.

**Wordy:** *The research proposals were reviewed by the committee.*

**Revised:** *The committee reviewed the research proposals.*

2. **Avoid writing long and wordy sentences:**

**Wordy:** *At this moment in time, Australians disenfranchised with the political system should be encouraged to participate in the voting process.*

**Revised:** *Australians should be encouraged to vote.*

3. **Avoid using phrases that do not add meaning to your sentence.**

Common examples:

all things being equal  
all things considered  
as a matter of fact  
as far as I am concerned  
at the end of the day  
at the present time  
due to the fact that  
for all intents and purposes  
for the most part  
for the purpose of  
in a manner of speaking  
in my opinion

in the event of  
in the final analysis

**Wordy:** *All things being equal, what I am trying to say is that in my opinion all Australians should, for all intents and purposes, have the right to free speech.*

**Revised:** *All Australians should have the right to free speech.*

#### 4. Avoid Using Noun Forms of Verbs:

**Wordy:** *The presentation of the arguments by the speaker was convincing.*

**Revised:** *The speaker presented their arguments convincingly. Or . . . The speaker argued convincingly.*

#### 5. Make each word count:

Words that are vague (such as thing or type) are often used to ‘pad out’ a sentence, but hinder clarity and sometimes meaning.

**Wordy:** *After reading several things in the area of political-type subjects, I decided to view the situation differently and change my argument about compulsory voting.*

**Revised:** *After reading several books on politics, I changed my view about compulsory voting.*

#### 6. Avoid overstating.

In academic writing avoid overstating something that does not need to be overstated.

Examples:

*The children were really hungry. (You are either hungry or you are not hungry).*

*The condition of the house was very dilapidated. (The condition of the house is either dilapidated or not dilapidated).*

*I totally agree this research is important. (You either agree or you do not agree).*

#### Sources:

[What is Verbosity? - Common feedback comments and what they mean - LibGuides at University of Newcastle Library](#)

[Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus](#)

[Verbosity - Wikipedia](#)

[Advanced 3 \(anglophone.ir\)](#)