

## Writing Skills – Part 1

### Writing clear, Forceful Sentences

#### **Economy**

Never make a thought more complicated than it really is. If you can express yourself simply and directly, do so. Here are some errors to avoid.

#### **Useless Words**

*Wordy:* At the soccer match, Joel met up with two friends from elementary school.

*Concise:* At the soccer match, Joel met two friends from elementary school.

## **Duplication**

Avoid saying the same thing twice, even though in different words.

*Wordy:* We flew by air to Cleveland and returned back by bus.

*Concise:* We flew to Cleveland and returned by bus.

## **Wordy Construction**

*Don't use too many words to express an idea. Condense a phrase to a word, clause to a phrase or even a word. Be a which hunter and eliminate all unnecessary whiches.*

*Wordy:* The newscast which was televised this morning on a local station described a suspicious car which had a license plate that was from the state of North Dakota.

*Concise:* This morning's local television newscast described a suspicious car with a North Dakota license plate.

## **Pretentious Language**

*Unless you are being humorous, don't use a longer word if a simpler word will do the job. Save the longer word for a context in which the simpler word is not as meaningful.*

## **Building Power in Writing**

*Pretentious:* The Feline member of our family loves to frolic, gambol, cavort for considerable periods of time with the canine member of our family ménage.

*Simpler:* Our cat often plays with the family dog.

*Note:* The first sentence might be acceptable in a humorous essay mocking Pretention.

## **Piled-up Modifiers**

*Don't pile adjective, adverb upon adverb. Where possible, use specific nouns and verbs to reduce the number of modifiers.*

*Wordy:* The young, immature baby of but a year walked unsteadily and shakily across the floor into the outstretched, waiting arms of her waiting mother.

*Concise:* The one-year-old tottered across the floor into her mother's outstretched arms.

## **Practice 1:**

**In each pair of sentences, choose the more economical and point out why the chosen sentence is preferable.**

1.
  - A. The house, which stood on the corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue, has been declared a landmark with historical associations.
  - B. The house on the corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue has been declared a historic landmark.
  
2.
  - A. July daytime temperatures this year have averaged about 73 degrees.
  - B. July temperatures during the day this year have averaged about 73 degrees on the average.
  
3.
  - A. The Paso Fino is a relatively small horse with a distinctive, appealing gait.
  - B. Of the equine breed, the Paso Fino is a horse that is relatively small but with a gait that is as distinctive as it is appealing.
  
4.
  - A. The Chrono watch is cheap in price but efficient in use.
  - B. The Chrono watch is cheap but efficient.

5. A. When Ted found he had lost his keys, he rushed to the store he had just left.
- B. When Ted found he had carelessly and thoughtlessly lost his keys, he rushed rapidly and swiftly into the store he just left.

*Rewrite the following selections to make the more concise. Keep in mind the preceding suggestions.*

1. The bus that I take to school seems to have one shock absorber that is faulty.
2. My favorite pet among all pets is the canine pet.
3. My brother owns a beautiful cat that has long hair.
4. In Tom Sawyer it tells a story of a boy on the Mississippi.
5. The Biltmore House in Asheville is a magnificent house, probably the largest mansion in the nation.