**Eliminating Wordiness**

“The individual’s grounding in an academic program specializing in the teaching of the major theories of robotics and the aspirational tenets of the ethical development of artificial intelligences caused that person to be regarded by potential employers as possibly the person best suited for the role of project manager in their company.”

That sentence is badly written to illustrate wordiness. While not so awkwardly constructed that it’s unreadable and its meaning lost, its overuse of articles and bogus “scholarly” tone result in passive voice. Here’s a better, less wordy way to write the same thing:

“The company hired the applicant whose qualifications in robotics and artificial intelligence best matched the job description.”

Authors establish credibility by writing intentionally and clearly. Written English allows flexibility in word order to communicate precise and nuanced meaning. Clarity often results from careful use of fewer words than a writer initially thinks necessary.

Although repetition can be an important stylistic and organizational tool in academic writing (for example, readers usually expect to see a new, stronger version of the thesis statement repeated in the conclusion of an essay), there is a difference between repetition and redundancy. Three types of redundancy tend to appear in early attempts at academic writing.

1. Conceptual repetition – when a writer discusses an issue in one place, then repeats the discussion at another place in the paper using nearly the same wording.
2. Repetition of the identical sentences or phrasing used previously in the paper – when it seems as if a section has been cut and pasted from one paragraph to another. Sometimes, this type of redundancy is an editorial artifact – something left in place because the writer forgot to remove it after a revision.
3. Stylistic repetition – when a term or word’s variant is repeated within a sentence, paragraph, or larger work. There can be a very fine line between effective repetition and annoying redundancy for readers!

Sentences that are indirect or distance the reader from the main action tend to be awkward. (Hint: these sentences are often in passive voice!) A writer may deliberately write an indirect sentence in order to achieve an imagined “scholarly” voice or to seem unbiased. Just as often, students construct awkward sentences because they aren’t sure how to clearly communicate their meaning.

Passive voice: The lamp was broken.

*Passive voice often distances the reader from the subject of the sentence, sometimes omitting it altogether! Passive voice also depends heavily on the “to be” verb.

Active voice: Joe broke the lamp.
These additional examples illustrate how to fix the problem of redundancy, awkward construction, and passive voice.

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“By the time he had reached the age of fourteen, James Robertson, he became an apprentice for a baker named Jacko Holton.”

Corrected: “James Robertson was apprenticed by age fourteen to baker Jacko Holton.”

“This noted information to contact an emergency contact person on an application for employment is critical in case of a life threatening emergency situation or in a situation where an employee has become too sick to agree to medical treatment but who has not lost consciousness to enable emergency treatment in a hospital.”

Corrected: “Employers use emergency contact information (usually provided on job applications) when workers are badly hurt on the job or get too sick to drive themselves home or to the hospital.”

“When a sofa is donated to a charitable organization, it is given unconditionally for the intent to improve or have a significant decor-changing effect for another person needing the piece of furniture.”

Corrected: “People who donate couches don’t want them back and usually hope the donation helps somebody.”
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