

# the Writing Centers at Saint Mary's

Winona and Minneapolis

## Grammar and Punctuation: Reducing Wordiness

Strong academic writing is concise; it uses as few words as possible to make a point. We are going to cover three ways to make your writing more concise here.

**#1** Eliminate unnecessary words like “there are” and “this.”

These filler words aren’t needed for meaning and don’t serve a purpose.

**#2** Combine sentences where possible.

If you can combine sentences into compound and/or complex sentences, you’ll be eliminating words and possibly helping to form stronger connections between ideas.

**#3** Use active voice and strong verbs.

In active voice, the “doer” of the verb comes first, which can help with clarity. Using strong verbs often eliminates helper verbs and makes your point stronger.

Let’s see these ideas in action below:

### Draft Paragraph

It has been shown that dieters are more successful when they eliminate artificial sweeteners (Smith 2014). Until recently, however, it hasn’t been clear why. There are many documented effects of artificial sweeteners (Dalton & Fool, 2010). Blood sugar can be impacted by these effects (Smith, 2014). Over time, these effects can cause diseases like diabetes (Smith, 2014).

### Revision Notes

It has been shown that dieters are more successful when they eliminate artificial sweeteners (Smith, 2014). Until recently, however, it hasn’t been clear why. There are many documented effects of artificial sweeteners (Dalton & Fool, 2010). Blood sugar can be impacted by these effects (Smith, 2014). Over time, these effects can cause diseases like diabetes (Smith, 2014).

*not needed*  
*combine these sentences*  
*not needed*  
*combine these sentence*

### Final Draft

Dieters are more successful when they eliminate artificial sweeteners, but it hasn’t been clear why (Smith, 2014). Artificial sweeteners have documented effects, which can impact blood sugar and, eventually, cause diseases like diabetes (Dalton & Fool, 2010; Smith, 2014).

By eliminating filler phrases, combining sentences, and using active voice, the final draft is shorter but conveys the same meaning.

