

Description

Have you experienced writing a manuscript that seems to go on and on, is exceedingly verbose, and repeats ideas and words throughout the document? Have you been asked to reduce the word count in academic manuscripts and wondered what to do about it? If so, you're not alone! In this article, we will go through the top 12 tips to reduce word count in academic manuscripts.

Tip 1!

Add Exact and Specific Actions

This may sound counterproductive. After all, how can you add something to reduce word count? Well, in this case, you can and you should.

Longer sentence: After listening to each practice sound, the participants were instructed to choose the number on the scale that better represented their feelings. (22 words)

Revised sentence: Participants chose the number on the scale that better represented their feelings after listening to each practice sound. (18 words)

Tip 2!

Use Gerunds

When you use the "ing" form of verbs, you can eliminate one or two other words.

Longer sentence: The seller only has to make the quantity effect sufficiently high to compensate for the highest possible price effect (19 words)

Revised sentence: The seller can compensate for the highest possible price effect by sufficiently increasing the quantity effect. (16 words)

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Tip 3!

Use Abbreviations

You can use abbreviations for long phrases that are used often in the manuscript. Make sure to define this in the first use and then use consistently throughout.

Longer sentence: To solve the problems mentioned above, we asked 207 participants to rate 935 sounds using the Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM) and basic emotional scales. (23 words)

Revised sentence: To solve the problems mentioned above, we asked 207 participants to rate 935 sounds using SAM and basic emotional scales. (20 words)

Tip 4!

Remove “that”

This is frequently overused in academic writing and can be removed from many sentences.

Longer sentence: That the mutants displayed similar growth rates and mycelial morphologies were due to the wild-type yeast extract cells. (18 words)

Revised sentence: Mutants displayed similar growth rates and mycelial morphologies due to the wild-type yeast extract cells. (15 words)

Tip 5!

Remove “the”

Sometimes, articles at the start of sentences can be removed relatively quickly and safely.

Longer sentence: In the paper, we not only describe the construction of such a resource, but also report on the analysis of it. (21 words)

Revised sentence: This paper not only describes the construction of such a resource, but also reports on its analysis. (17 words)

Tip 6!

Hyphenate

In most modern word-processing programs, hyphenated words count as one word when compared to their non-hyphenated counterparts. So, try to use hyphenated words, when possible.

Longer sentence: However, here, annotations of the gold standard variety were actually done in

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English. (13 words)

Revised sentence: However, here, gold-standard annotations were actually done in English. (9 words)

Tip 7!

Pluralize

Use “their” instead of “his or her”. Use “people” or “individual” instead of “a person.”

Longer sentence: A person draws specifically on Schelling’s strategy of conflict, which draws attention to the role of shared beliefs as focal points around which the behaviors of economic agents converge. (29 words)

Revised sentence: People draw specifically on Schelling’s strategy of conflict, which draws attention to the role of shared beliefs as focal points around which the behaviors of economic agents converge. (28 words)

Tip 8!

Remove Filler Words

In academic writing, filler words take up space without conveying information. These filler words should be eliminated to reduce word count. Some filler words that are commonly used in academic manuscripts are as follows:

- The fact that
- It has been reported that
- It was observed/found that
- There is/there are
- Really

Longer sentence: It has been reported that the incidence of ovarian cancer is really increasing in Korea, and there are numerous risk factors for the disease that have been identified. (28 words)

Revised sentence: The incidence of ovarian cancer is increasing in Korea, and numerous risk factors for the disease have been identified. (19 words)

Tip 9!

Avoid Repetition

You may have repeated information presented in tables and figures again throughout your manuscript.

Longer sentence: Patient demographics are of multiple types in this study and correlate well with the

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data presented. (16 words)

Revised shorter sentence: Patient demographics are described in Table 1. (7 words)

Tip 10!

Avoid Nominalizations

Nominalizations simply mean turning a verb into a noun. Not only does it sound stuffy, but it tacks on extra words to your writing.

Longer sentence: A diagnosis of cancer was made as increases in tumor-specific biomarkers were observed. (13 words)

Revised sentence: Cancer was diagnosed as tumor-specific biomarkers increased. (7 words)

Tip 11!

Substitute Multiple words with Single Words

You can substitute “on the other hand” with “conversely”, or “in addition to” with “also”.

Longer sentence: On the other hand, when the brain is activated, electrochemical processes for transmission will be induced by neurons for signaling. (20 words)

Revised sentence: Conversely, when the brain is activated, electrochemical processes for transmission will be induced by neurons for signaling. (17 words)

Tip 12!

Replace the Passive voice with the Active voice

While in the past, the passive voice was more popularly used in academic writing, most journals and funders now find the active voice perfectly acceptable. In fact, journals such as *Science* and *Nature* prefer the active voice.

Longer sentence: DNA from the seedlings was amplified using PCR. (8 words)

Revised sentence: We amplified seedling DNA using PCR. (6 words)

So, now you know how to go about reducing the word count in academic manuscripts. Follow these tips and say goodbye to verbosity as this will help increase clarity in your manuscript.

Category

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2. Reporting Research

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2017/05/02
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