

Materials Checklist:

- Script
- Handout
- Worksheet
- Worksheet Answer Key

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Concise Writing Workshop – **Script**

Note: there are two options for this workshop. At the end, students will either attempt to revise a paragraph we have provided or they will work on a paper they have drafted already. You must budget your time accordingly. If you do the former, you can afford to spend extra time giving a more thorough treatment to the Recognizing Problem Areas and worksheet, because they need less time to edit a single paragraph and go over it. If, on the other hand, they work on their own paper, you will have to be less thorough with the materials in order to give them time to go over their papers and share with partners.

1.) Introduce yourself, the APAC (hours, services), and the workshop (< 5 mins)

-This is the concise writing workshop, the aim of it is to help you understand the critical skill of writing clearly and directly. After the workshop, you will be better equipped to recognize problem areas in your papers (such as wordiness, repetitiveness, and passive voice) and understand how to fix these issues. It is important to write concisely because it makes it easier for your reader to understand what you are arguing

Explain: Writing concisely does not mean writing short passages—instead, it means writing clearly and directly. There are times when being wordy is a good thing, but there are many times when it hurts your writing. For example, being a little wordy can become part of your voice or your individual style, which can (eventually) make your writing stand out and be truly unique in the eyes of your reader. However, wordiness will usually cause confusion for your reader—especially early on in your writing education. For this workshop we will focus on being able to recognize problem areas and then work on solving them.

2.) Recognizing problem areas (10 mins)

- Give out the “Problem Areas and Their Solutions” handout: go through this item by item to describe to students how to recognize the various things that create non-concise writing. Discuss, cold call, and ask for questions where possible. This can very easily turn into a lengthy lecture, try not to read directly from the sheet or go too into depth—they have the sheet in front of them, they don’t need to have it read to them; they just need to understand what is on the sheet.

When discussing Passive Voice, discuss this technique/activity

Killing Kittens (or Zombies):

-Ask for a volunteer, tell them you just need to borrow their name

-once a name is given write on the board (Use zombies if kittens make you squeamish)

“ ___ killed Kittens” and “The Kittens were killed by ___ “

- Point out the verb (in this case “kill”) and the actor (In this case, the student’s name) of each sentence: in a passive sentence the verb comes before the actor. In an active sentence, the actor comes before the verb.



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3.) The Worksheet *(5 mins to work on it, 5 mins+ to go over it)*

Hand out the worksheet and break the students into small groups (if large class) or pairs (if smaller class) and go over the worksheet, correcting the sentences as necessary. In interest of time, have them start with one from each section, before trying to complete the whole thing as others are working on finishing.

Option 1: if they are editing our provided paragraph *(15 mins)*

Explain that the last part of the worksheet is a paragraph where they can use their new experience to identify and fix sentences in a context more like they might find when editing a paper. Give them 15 minutes or so to go over it, then discuss the answers. **While they are working, look at the paragraph on the back of your answer key and consider actions you might take to correct it.**

Option 2: If they are going over their own papers *(15 mins)*

Each student should have part of an assignment on which to work, have them remain or return to their groups that they were in for the previous activity. Have them swap papers in their groups or pairs and go over the first paragraph or two of the paper, looking for the things they talked about.

Instruct them to read over the paper, marking as they go. Remind them they are not looking so much at the content, rather they are looking to help their partner identify the aforementioned problem areas within their essays. Give them hints on how to mark things up:

- Circle prepositions, "is" verb forms, undefined pronouns, prepositions, and weak verbs
- underline passive voice, awkward wording, and repetition

After they are done, have them exchange papers back and discuss their changes and problems with their partners. If there is time, ask for volunteers to explain what their major problems were and to give an example of one of their problem sentences and how they might fix it.

