Revising for Clarity

Contents

What is Clarity? 1

Why Aim for Clarity? 2

Tips for Clarity 2

- Ambiguous Pronouns 2
- Wordiness and Word Economy 6
- Missing Assumptions 9
- Too Many Technical Terms 11

Conclusion 13

Appendix A: Table of Writing Tips 15

This document offers ways to revise writing to improve its clarity and to avoid common grammar and style issues that affect clarity.

We will look at how to avoid wordiness, ambiguity, filling in assumptions, and removing technical terms. Overall, we review how to make writing more pleasing and easier to get through. These are all common issues I notice in a lot of the editing work I do. It's easy to be unclear in writing, since we are biased in our own writing. We know what we mean in our writing, but the reader may have to jump through hoops to understand what our writing means. Readers don't have the same background and knowledge as the author.

What is Clarity?

Clarity is the clearness of writing. To be clear is to be transparent, meaning that a writing's intended meaning shines through. The meaning and all the details are easily seen without straining our attention. The opposite of clarity is unclearness. Clearness is often muddied by ambiguity. Ambiguity is where there are two or more interpretations of a writing, and it's not fully clear which interpretation is intended.

Why Aim for Clarity?

Aiming for clarity is important, because when we write, we intend a message or meaning. If someone interprets our meaning, the semantics of the sentence, other than we intend, then our writing is pointless, and we have wasted our time and energy.

Clarity reduces the cognitive load of the reader. Cognitive load is how much cognitive, or thinking, resources the reader must spend on reading a piece of writing. If someone is stuck debating whether a word means this or that, they are expending resources. It can also frustrate the reader, since they might not know what is meant, and they are stuck between two interpretations.

Unclearness also eats up the reader's time. If a reader can't get through a writing in a timely manner, they may stop reading. Time is a valuable resource, and by writing for clarity, we respect the reader's time.

Clarity in writing is usually a hidden feature of writing, and clarity usually goes unnoticed. However, unclear writing is very noticeable, since it frustrates and confuses the reader.

Finally, unclear writing might give off the impression of a poor writer with a lack of skills. Professional-sounding writing is clear. Yet even professional writing can contain ambiguity. Take the following headline from a 2012 New York Times opinion column, the most highly regarded newspaper in the world:

> "Israel Ducks on Human Rights."

Is this an opinion piece about ducks talking out on humans' rights? Or about how Israel is avoiding important human rights affairs? The former sounds fun to read.

Tips for Clarity

In this section, we look at common issues and tips for improving clarity.

Ambiguous Pronouns

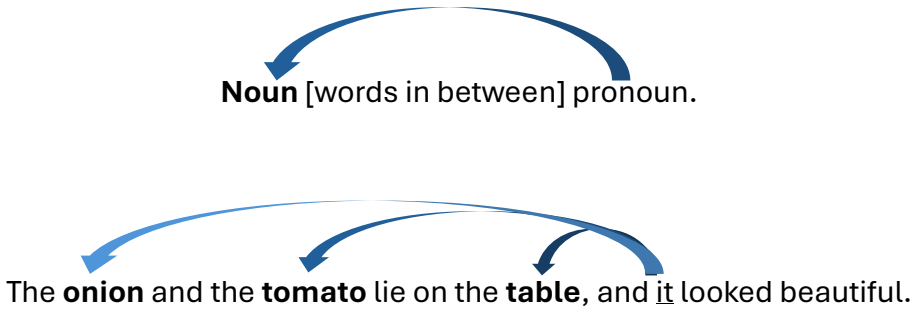
Ambiguous pronouns are the most common issue I see in writing. A pronoun is a noun, like "its," "her," or "this" that refers to another noun. This other noun can be an object, place, person, or idea. For instance,

> Jim was upset that his favorite team lost.

In this sentence, “his” is the pronoun, which refers to the noun “Jim.” Without the reference to Jim, “his” becomes ambiguous, or not clear to what “his” refers to.

Particular objects with names are concrete nouns, while ideas or concepts are generally abstract nouns. Concrete nouns have a particular instantiation, like the carrot on the table. Abstract nouns refer to things that are general, complex, or intangible, like “thoughts” or “sociability.”

The problem with pronouns is that the noun they refer to isn’t clear. The pronoun can refer to more than one noun. Think of a “reference” as a *pointer*. Imagine having a line of people and pointing toward them and saying “they.” Here, the pointing is the reference, and the people are the nouns of the sentence or other nearby nouns. The “they” is the pronoun. Does “they” refer to all those people? One person in the line? A subset of them? The reference and pointing aren’t clear.



As you can see, the pointer can refer to any one of the previous nouns. Was it a beautiful table, tomato, or onion? More nouns are more possible references.

Here’s another example in prose:

> The dog and the donkey both played in the field, and they really enjoyed the company.

The pronoun in this sentence is underlined. The problem here is that "they" can refer to either the dog, the donkey, or both. This sentence doesn't clearly indicate which noun the pronoun refers to. Sure, the reader could probably parse out the correct reference by reading into the context or the surrounding sentences, but we never want to make the reader work harder than they should. The writer, of course, knows which noun the pronoun refers to, and so this is where the issue arises, since it's easy to overlook.

A reference to an *abstract* noun by a pronoun is doubly problematic, because in writing, it isn't clear which noun the pronoun refers to, and the noun it does refer to is complex and abstract. Many writers tend to point to abstract ideas and then, in the next sentence, say "This …" Here is an example.

> The idea that sociability is one of the basic characteristics of human life is a useful one. This allows us to better determine how to implement services that are useful for society.

Here is the dreaded "this." This is probably the most common error of clarity. Can you figure out what "this" refers to above? It could refer to "the idea of sociability," "sociability," "one of the basic characteristics of human life," "knowing about one of the basic characteristics of human life," or "human life." These references are all nouns or noun phrases (noun phrases are phrases treated as a single noun).

Solutions

How do we solve the ambiguous pronoun issue? First, for every use of a pronoun, check if there is any possible ambiguity. If so:

Keep nouns and pronouns close. Keep pronouns close to the noun they modify, and don't let other nouns come between that noun and the pronoun. Most times, we assume a pronoun refers to the closest preceding noun. See two examples below.

> Janet washed and Haley dried the dishes. She hated washing the dishes.

> Janet washed the dishes, which she hated, and Haley dried the dishes.

Read both sentences and observe in which sentence "she" has a much clearer reference. The change was moving "she" closer to the noun it was meant to refer to.

Replace pronouns with the noun itself. This is my favorite strategy. Remove all pronouns and replace them with the noun itself. Problem solved! However, a downside of this solution is that it can introduce monotony or repetition. Here is an example.

> Ben went to the grocery store with Jenny, and Ben wanted to buy Ben's favorite cereal. When Ben arrived at Ben's local grocery store, Ben was excited.

There are no pronouns in this sentence, but you can easily see how it can get repetitive. The key here is to balance nouns and pronouns, and always make sure a pronoun is clear. Since Jenny, as a female, would use the pronouns she or her, we can safely substitute "Ben" for some male pronouns like him or his. Here is a better implementation:

> Ben went to the grocery store with Jenny, and Ben wanted to buy his favorite cereal. When he arrived at his local grocery store, Ben was excited.

What we've done here is to use one noun per independent clause. This strikes a good balance between pronoun reference and the noun it refers to. Each pronoun requires its own assessment for clarity, and there is no hard and fast rule for each pronoun. Yes, it's a lot of work, but good writing takes work.

Remove other nouns. Another simple solution is to just remove other nouns. This solution means there are no other nouns for the pronoun to compete with. One noun and pronoun per sentence or idea works well.

Talk about one subject at a time (or as few as possible). In conjunction with the "remove other nouns" solution, another easy way to lessen pronoun ambiguity is to talk about one subject at a time. When you change subjects, notify the reader using a signpost showing an idea shift.

> In our public schools, we are taught that evolution, and not creation, is the correct story of human existence and it even has a factual basis.

> Evolution is the true story of human existence, and it has a factual basis. Consequently, in our public schools we teach evolution and not creation.

In the sentence with the pronoun, we reduced the sentence to two nouns: "evolution" and "true story of human existence." However, those nouns are nearly synonyms in this context. Thus, we've reduced the number of subjects and increased clarity of the pronoun reference.

This. To solve the "this" problem noted above, especially for abstract nouns, one easy solution is to just add another concrete noun following the "this." Doing so can at least narrow down the possible references for the pronoun. Going back to our previous example:

> The idea that sociability is one of the basic characteristics of human life is a useful one. This allows us to better determine how to implement services that are useful for society.

All we do is narrow it down by adding in another noun:

> The idea that sociability is one of the basic characteristics of human life is a useful one. This **idea** allows us to better determine how to implement services that are useful for society.

This is much better. Now, we've narrowed down the most likely candidate to "the idea of sociability."

We can also just remove the pronoun and replace it with the corresponding noun. Since it is in a new sentence, we don't have to worry too much about repetition.

Wordiness and Word Economy

Word economy is one of my favorite things about writing. The challenge in word economy is to write as few words as possible without losing the essential meaning of a sentence. We ask ourselves: How can I write fewer words but still clearly say the same thing?

More words means more time spent on reading, and thus, more words processed by our cognitive faculty. It uses up the cognitive resources and time of the reader. Further, more words usually means more prepositions, and more prepositions increase the cognitive load on the reader. Cognitive load is how much cognitive resources the reader needs to spend reading a sentence. For an example of how cognitive load works, compare the two sentences below

> The streamer who was known for streaming on Twitch that streamed many hours of review content on various movies that related to mystery thrillers always streamed a regular schedule depending on his audience who also demand that the streamer stream this content.

> The Twitch streamer StreamingBoss regularly streamed mystery thriller movie reviews, by demand of his audience.

Which one did you prefer? The first sentence has ten prepositions, while the second sentence has one. Would you say the shorter one has lost any meaning? Or do they say the same thing? Further, the first sentence has 42 words, while the second sentence has 14. That's a word savings of 66%!

Solutions

Remove weasel words and quantifiers. A quantifier is a word that quantifies some noun. A weasel word is a word that is used in place of a direct number, since the person is trying to cover up their lack of precision. They can both lead to ambiguity. Quantifiers are some, all, many, or few. For instance,

> Many people are divided over President Trump, since some of his policies are contentious.

Here we have the quantifiers "many" and "some." Does "many" add anything important to the sentence? Sure, it might be saying that most people are divided over Trump. However, we could argue that almost everyone is divided over him. In this case, we can remove this quantifier, because almost everyone is divided over him. No sense splitting hairs here about 90%. The "some" is also not very meaningful. We can just say that his policies, on average, are contentious. If it comes to needing that we split hairs and discuss exactly which policies, and the statistics of those policies matter, then we can do so. Further, we are talking about the people who are divided over Trump, and this regards his contentious policies, since this is what the people are divided over. Thus, it makes no sense to indicate the policies that are not contentious. They are divided over Trump because of his contentious policies.

> People are divided over President Trump, since his policies are contentious.

We've made the sentence clearer and removed three words, increasing word economy. We haven't lost any significant essential meaning of the sentence either. It might not seem like we've done a lot of work here, but if we imagine that every third sentence has a quantifier or two, and there are one hundred sentences in an essay, that translates to 33-66 words removed that don't have much use. That saves a reader roughly one minute of reading time and some cognitive resources. When coupled with other word economy tactics, that's a significant improvement.

Of course, the “Many” or “some” in the sentence could be essential, but only if we are making a claim about the statistics of Trump’s followers or the number of policies that are contentious and which aren’t. However, in this case, we aren’t discussing specific statistics, so this information is not essential.

How weasel words work is that someone might ‘sneak in’ a “some” or “few” when they don’t really know a precise number. For instance, in a claim that hasn’t had sufficient research, like

> Some scientists agree that global warming is occurring, since many studies prove it.

Does “some” refer to two or a hundred scientists? Does “many” refer to four studies or one hundred? The differences here are meaningful. If the author really doesn’t know, they can just leave out those weasel words.

> Scientists agree that global warming is occurring, since studies prove it.

While we might argue that this sentence is also in some way unclear or might lead to ambiguity, since it’s not clear about how many scientists and studies, it’s no more or less ambiguous than the above phrase. Plus, we’ve reduced the word count by two words. Fewer words is less reading and more time saved for the reader.

Most people add in quantifiers and weasel words without thinking about them, and it feels natural to do so.

Often, quantifiers don’t add much meaning to a sentence. Unless there is a claim involving quantifier logic, the quantifiers can almost certainly be removed. Removing quantifiers lowers word count. It also improves the accuracy and clarity of a sentence, since the claim is more specific.

Lessen the number of prepositions in a sentence. A preposition is a word that indicates a prepositional phrase, which shows place, time, or additional information about a subject. The words like “that,” “who,” and “on” are all words indicating a prepositional phrase. See two examples below (prepositions are double underlined and prepositional phrases are single underlined)

> The elderly gentleman, that walked through the park every day, was rushed to the hospital.

> The cat on the mat stretched out lazily.

These sentences are not very unclear, since they each only have one prepositional phrase. The prepositions here are “that” and “on,” and they both indicate extra information about the subjects (the elderly gentleman in the first sentence and the cat in the second sentence). Let’s bring back our earlier streamer example to show how it can be a problem:

> The streamer who was known for streaming on Twitch that streamed many hours of review content on various movies that related to mystery thrillers always streamed a regular schedule depending on his audience who also demand that the streamer stream this content.

We can see all the prepositions here. Let’s tackle our other two examples.

> Gerald was rushed to the hospital.

If we know the name of the person in the elderly gentleman example, we can just replace it with their name. A lot fewer words.

However, in our cat on the mat example, the preposition might be essential. For instance, if there were two cats, one on the couch and one on the mat. In that case, the prepositional phrase is essential to indicate clearly which cat is being identified. That sentence is fine as is. However, we might identify the cat otherwise, such as by name.

> Fluffy stretched out lazily.

No prepositions are present, and the sentence retains the same essential meaning. Problem solved.

Missing Assumptions

When writing skips certain important expository or logical steps, it leaves the reader to fill in gaps. The writing has implicit premises or leaves out information the author assumes the reader knows. This can happen when care is not taken to take each step carefully and guide the reader, or when we just want to get from start to finish or get on with the conclusion, which is mainly what we care about.

Writing is a stepwise process. If we want our writing to have coherence or have a smooth flow, we need to give it a logical or chronological flow. Sometimes it might seem redundant or boring to insert many little details or take baby steps into the flow of our writing, but it's always better to, I like to say, assume the reader is stupid. Never assume the reader knows something. Take the following two examples, for instance

> The extraterrestrial asked, "what is that creature?", pointing to the rabbit. "This is a rabbit", I replied. "I already explained what mammals are, and all rabbits are mammals." "So, this rabbit is an animal!"
>
> Police report: Here are the events that transpired, according to witnesses. The criminal burst into the convenience store and, with weapon raised, demanded the attendant withdraw all the money from the cash register. He ran out and into a black Toyota, and he sped away down Rockston Boulevard.

Do you see the logical gaps here? In the first example, there is a *logical* jump from mammals to animals, and it's missing the fact that all mammals are animals. In the second example, there is a chronological or event jump that assumes that the reader knows whether the criminal got off with the money or not. Did you assume that he did? It leaves that fact out. If this were a police report, it would not be a good one, because it leaves out important events and details. Also, was the attendant shot or did the criminal fire his weapon? What kind of weapon was it? These details would be important for sentencing.

Writing should hold the reader's hand and guide them through your ideas, going stepwise either logically or chronologically. You want to be a good host, since the reader has visited your writing space. Slow and steady wins the race.

Here are examples that take it nice and slow that have no assumptions.

> The extraterrestrial asked, "what is that creature?", pointing to the rabbit. "This is a rabbit", I replied. "I already explained what mammals are, and all rabbits are mammals." I continued, "Every mammal is an animal, too." "So, this rabbit is an animal!"

> Police report: Here are the events that transpired, according to witnesses. The criminal burst into the convenience store and, with his gun raised, demanded that the attendant withdraw all the money from the cash register. The attendant pulled out his own gun and pointed it at the criminal. The criminal then ran out of the store without getting the cash and jumped into a black Toyota, speeding away down Rockston Boulevard.

Too Many Technical Terms

Too many technical terms or discipline-specific jargon can make writing unclear. Jargon is often privileged, only understood by those who have studied in some specific field or are part of some community that uses specific language. Not everyone reading a writing will know the terms or be in that community. Readers may need to take some time to look up specific terms if they want to make sense of the writing.

Readers tend to use common or layman's definitions and meanings of terms. For instance, in philosophy and logic, a "valid" argument means an argument that takes a certain logical form. A reader who isn't aware of this term might think it means a "good" or "true" argument, which is not the right way of thinking about it. In logic, a valid argument is not *always* true. Further, "argument" is specific and might also be taken out of context—in logic, it's a set of statements supporting a conclusion. Someone who isn't logic-savvy might think it's a discourse between two people trying to prove a point.

Even those who might be in the specific field sometimes might need to take time to think about the term if too many technical terms are used. Even within a field, sometimes terms might have different meanings.

Consider the following example

> Idealists reject the materialist side of the dualist conception of mind: nonmental material substance is inconceivable. Materialists hold, in contrast, that every substance is a material substance (and nothing more). Chapter 4 focuses on one historically influential materialist response to Cartesianism, behaviourism.[i]

This passage is from John Heil's 2013 book *Philosophy of Mind*, cited as useful for an introductory course on the philosophy of mind. How much of it can you understand? Even undergraduate students of philosophy might take time to parse this passage. I count seven terms that could use some more context: Idealist, materialism, dualist, mind, material, substance, and Cartesianism. They all mean specific things. Note that the passage does explain these terms elsewhere, but for the moment, we will assume this passage is a standalone.

Unless we're writing for a very specific technical audience, like writing a report for a scientist (or in the preceding example, a philosopher of mind), we will want to either

1. Leave out technical terms
2. Explain what those technical terms mean

Leave out technical terms. The easiest way to get around this issue is to just forgo technical terms. Replace them with a more common synonym word or phrase. For instance, using our previous example

> Those who think that everything exists only within the mind—the inner mental world—and that there is no external world or matter reject the matter side of the idea that there exists both mind and matter: mind-independent, or external, matter is inconceivable. Those who believe that there exist only external objects or matter hold, in contrast, that everything is made up of matter (and nothing more). Chapter 4 focuses on one historically influential matter-only response to the idea that there are both mind and matter, behaviourism.

This might be easier to read, but the passage is longer, wordier, and we lose out on the technical terms that might be used for learning purposes or that could be used for concision later by writing the term instead of a phrase describing it.

Explain what those technical terms mean. Another way to get around this issue is that if you must use those terms, or if you are writing for a wide audience, such as for both technical and non-technical readers, is to use the term and then explain what it means. Let's use the same example but with this solution instead.

> Idealists—those who think everything is mind—reject the materialist, or those who think that everything is matter, side of the dualist, or mind and matter, conception of mind: nonmental material substance, the substrate for everything that exists, is inconceivable. Materialists hold, in contrast, that every substance is a material substance (and nothing more). Chapter 4 focuses on one historically influential materialist response to Cartesianism, or the dualist idea, behaviourism.

As you can see, the technical term remains, but it becomes much clearer that it means something specific. My favorite way of explaining is to use a comma and add ", or [definition]" or ", which means [definition]." It's easy and doesn't eat up too many words or space. Just be careful to use the appropriate amount of time and space to define a term. I try to avoid parentheses, because if there are a lot of technical terms, then the parentheses clutter up the writing and break up the reader's flow (it causes readers to slow down, and the parentheses usually sit in the middle of an idea, which breaks it up and uses more cognitive resources). Philosophy is a highly complex and abstract discipline, and so the examples here don't work as neatly as they would with other less abstract terms.

Depending on the type of writing and its length, we can also define the terms in their own section or paragraph. One thing I like to sometimes do in essays is to make clear all the technical terms in advance, before they are used. For an essay, this comes in the first paragraph after the introduction: "Let us start by defining some important technical terms." Giving the terms their own space is useful, because it removes the bloating and wordiness of sentences when defining them in the same sentence they are used. The two choices are to define before or just as/after they are first used.

On the one hand, writing with technical terms can make writing more concise. Many of those terms are complex concepts that are laden with meaning. On the other hand, by explaining those terms, we add more words and dilute the passage. There is a trade-off. The best is when you can directly substitute a word one-for-one. It's also important to be wary of who you're writing for. You don't want to "dumb it down" and insult someone with a PhD by wasting their time explaining in detail every single term. You also don't want to lose a generalist reader by using highly technical and specific terms. It's important to think about who you're writing for. For a generalist or layman audience, **always** define.

Conclusion

There are many ways to revise for clarity. We can tackle ambiguous pronouns that might confuse the reader as to which noun a pronoun refers to. We can clear this up by either replacing those pronouns with the nouns themselves, putting the noun and pronoun closer together, and removing other nouns from the sentence and only discussing one subject at a time.

Wordiness is when sentences are long and laden with prepositions or extra nonessential and obfuscating words. We can solve this issue by removing weasel words and quantifiers and by lessening the number of prepositions in a sentence.

Choice of language is also important. We want to write using a language most appropriate to who we expect the readers to be. For general audiences, use a general language. Always be aware of who the audience is and write appropriately.

Assumptions in writing can lead to missing logical connections or information crucial to understanding exactly what is meant. It gives key ideas and lets the reader clearly follow the flow of thought. We can tackle assumptions by putting ourselves in the shoes of the reader to ask what they may or may not know.

Finally, too many technical terms and jargon in writing can lose readers who aren't specialized in that language. By replacing technical terms with more general terms or explaining those terms, we can improve clarity and lessen the burden on the reader. We again need to be aware of our readers. We don't want to dumb down the writing for specialized readers, but we also don't want to lose layman readers. A good balance is essential for any general audience.

Any polished writing requires work. We can improve the clarity of a writing by revising. It may seem tedious, but if we bore our reader or write something they can't comprehend, then it makes no sense to have written it in the first place. This is because they just won't read it. Effective writing is clear, and clear writing is important if it is to be meaningful and have an impact.

For more writing documents and to get help with your writing, visit www.wilcoxwriting.ca. By subscribing to our newsletter, you get access to our Writing Center and free writing documents.

[i] Heil, John. *Philosophy of Mind: A Contemporary Introduction*. Third Edition. Routledge. 2013.

Appendix A: Table of Writing Tips

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Strategy for Clarity: Clear Pronoun References</th></tr>
<tr><td>Slogan</td><td colspan="2">“Pronoun and noun, who is abound?”</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Definitions</td><td><u>Pronoun</u>: a noun that refers to another noun.</td><td>Examples: “it,” “they,” “she,” “this,” and “that.”</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"><u>Clear pronoun reference</u>: a pronoun has an explicit and unambiguous link to a noun.</td></tr>
<tr><td>What’s the problem?</td><td colspan="2">Pronouns can be unclear when near multiple nouns or when there is some distance between the pronoun and the accompanying noun.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Why it’s a problem</td><td colspan="2">An unclear pronoun makes the reader pause and re-read the text, interrupts flow, and can leave the reader guessing.</td></tr>
<tr><td>How to fix it</td><td colspan="2">Either
1. remove other noun(s) around it,
2. rephrase sentence so the noun and pronoun are closer,
3. talk about one subject at a time, or
4. refrain from using a pronoun—just name the noun.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unclear example</td><td colspan="2">“The word ‘true’ indicates the aim of logic as does ‘beautiful’ that of aesthetics or ‘good’ that of ethics. All sciences have truth as <u>their</u> goal; but logic is also concerned with <u>it</u> in a quite different way from <u>this</u>. <u>It</u> has much the same relation to truth as physics has to weight or heat.”

(Gottlob Frege, “The Thought: A Logical Inquiry,” 1956, p. 289)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Fixed example</td><td colspan="2">“The word ‘true’ indicates the aim of logic as does ‘beautiful’ that of aesthetics or ‘good’ that of ethics. All sciences have truth as their goal; but logic is also concerned with [truth] in a quite different way from [the way the sciences characterize truth]. [The sciences / Logic] has much the same relation to truth as physics has to weight or heat.”</td></tr>
<tr><td>Caveat</td><td colspan="2">Be careful of repetition of using the noun in place of a pronoun:

“Doug fed the dog but not the cat, and the dog ate the dog’s meal. The dog was satiated, but then the dog needed to go outside to do the dog’s business.”</td></tr>
</table>

Strategy for Clarity: Removing Quantifiers and Weasel Words		
Slogan	"To be succinct, don't be a mink."	
Definitions	Quantifier: a word expressing quantity. Weasel word: a word that 'weasel's' out of a precise claim.	Examples: "some," "most," "plenty," "lots," and "many."
	Succinctness: To introduce word economy into your prose—compact and precise expression without wasted words.	
What's the problem?	Weasel words and quantifiers increase word count and introduce ambiguity—lessening clarity.	
Why it's a problem	More word count is more time spent reading. Weasel words and quantifiers may also introduce blurriness; a word like "some" isn't precise . . . how many or much is "some"?	
How to fix it	Check whether any quantifiers are necessary for the meaning of the sentence.	
Wordy example (72 words)	"In all that we have said hitherto concerning philosophy, we have scarcely touched on many matters that occupy a great space in the writings of most philosophers. Most philosophers—or, at any rate, very many—profess to be able to prove . . . There can be no doubt that the hope of finding reason to believe such theses as these has been the chief inspiration of many life-long students of philosophy." (Bertrand Russel, *Problems of Philosophy*, Chapter XIV)	
Fixed example (64 words)	"In [what] we have said hitherto concerning philosophy, we have scarcely touched on matters that occupy a great space in the writings of most philosophers. [There are] philosophers who profess to be able to prove. . . There can be no doubt that the hope of finding reason to believe such theses as these has been the chief inspiration of life-long students of philosophy."	
Caveat	Be careful of essential quantifiers necessary to the meaning of a sentence. For instance, the cogency or validity of arguments are indicated by "some," "many," "all," etc.	