

Style and Concise Writing

Journal articles have an expert audience that values efficient (concise) writing, e.g., Title and Abstract.

- saves reading time
- forces clarity and organization by the author
- saves journal space (\$)

Concise writing conveys much information in the fewest words.

Don't confuse academic conciseness with academic pretentiousness

Academics can write concisely (sometimes too concisely) and speak pretentiously (no word limit when talking).

1. Avoid unnecessary wordiness

“It has been reported that we ...”

vs.

“Reportedly, we ...”

(see box on p. 37 and Table 2.1, p. 39 for more examples)

2. Avoid unnecessary author perspective

“In our judgment, the results indicate ...”

“We believe that the results indicate ...”

vs.

“The results indicate ...”

The entire article is the judgment, belief, opinion, etc. of the authors, so no need to say that anywhere.

Example: Exercise 2.3, p. 38

124 words

Practice: Exercise 2.5 a-c, pp.40-41

a. 21 words --> ?

b. 33 words --> ?

c. 23 words --> ?

a. 21 words

Before irradiation, the sample chamber was flushed with nitrogen to remove air. (12 words)

Prior to irradiation, the sample chamber was flushed with nitrogen.

To remove the air, the sample chamber was flushed with nitrogen.

Before irradiation, the sample chamber was flushed with nitrogen to ensure air was absent.

b. 33 words

The photochemical reaction products upon irradiation in the presence of water possibly passivate the surface better than the photooxidation products during irradiation in dry air. (25 words)

During irradiation, the photochemical reaction products in the presence of water possibly passivate the surface better than the photooxidation products in dry air. (23 words)

During irradiation, the products in the presence of water may passivate the surface better than in dry air. (20 words)

c. 23 words

Thus, ArCl^+ presumably does not interfere with As quantification in the soil extracts. (13 words)

Thus, ArCl^+ may not interfere with As quantification in the soil extracts.

3. Nominalization

Turn a verb or adjective into a noun.

After we distilled product A, it was ...

After distillation, product A was ...

(saves 2 words in this small piece of writing)

This heterogeneous property of product A indicates ...

The heterogeneity of product A indicates ...

(saves 1 word)

The ability to deprotect the acid shows ...

Deprotection of the acid shows ...

(saves 3 words)

Table 2.2, p. 41 for examples