

REDUNDANCY

Redundancy means "unnecessary repetition." If you have said something clearly in one way and then you say it again (and even again) in a different way, you are being redundant. It can be two words that say the same thing, or two phrases, or two paragraphs. This phrase, for example contains redundancy:

College students at American institutions of higher learning

It is just as clear, and simpler, to say it this way:

American college students

The following phrases contain redundancy. Rewrite each of them.

1. a vacancy in a job opening

2. the eighteenth century European philosopher, Diderot, of France

3. a movie film about adultery

4. a cross-country drive from New Jersey to California

5. the deadly illness that killed twenty-seven people

6. professors who teach mathematics

7. the emotional state of love

8. learning the knowledge of how to do the work on the job

9. a bright sunny day

10. a warm friendly smile

11. the tearfulness of her crying face

12. The expressions on their faces were hard and grim, and sweat was pouring down their faces.

13. Waiting for a train in the freezing weather a person can freeze to death.

14. At least people don't have to pay for fuel when they ride public transportation, but if they had a car they would pay for it.

15. The light bulb is encased in a rectangular light shade, which is white in color. The light shade has dust on it which makes it look grayish.

16. I ended up coming back from Nassau with fifty percent less than three hundred dollars I started out with, which was good, because I only had to spend money on gifts to bring home.

17. As far as love is concerned, I guess if you really love someone and you are really devoted to him/her and then all of a sudden something happens and you happen to lose this person by death, separation, etc., it takes a long time to get over, but eventually you will and everything will be fine.

18. As time passed, I grew older and I had to go off to school.

19. Jamaica is an island in the West Indies; it is a beautiful island in the Caribbean Sea.

20. My reason for writing about New York City is that I was born here in New York.

A famous architect, Mies van der Rohe, said, "Less is more." E.F. Schumacher, an economist, says, "Small is beautiful." Do not try to write big, wasteful, gas-guzzling, redundant, Cadillacs of sentences. Write little Volkswagens and BMWs. Make your sentences small but direct and effective. Don't waste words. Don't use big words when small ones will do.

Much of the reading in college is difficult. You might get the impression that intellectual writing has to be difficult, and so, to sound intellectual, you make your own writing more complicated than it might otherwise be. Don't do it.

Here is a fact that you may not readily believe: Much intellectual writing is also very poor writing. Even though the ideas might be exciting, the writing is often unnecessarily difficult, redundant, poorly organized, and even obscure. Most complex ideas can be written simply, if enough work is put into the writing.