

Revising for Conciseness Paragraph A

The following responds to the Practice activity presented on p. 365 of *Acting on Words*.

Original Paragraph

In terms of the very many persistent concerns about the question of our ongoing water safety after the frightening scare over health in the Canadian town of Walkerton, Ontario, many people, including all Canadians, need to start to consider the many facts about all this. The expectations that we have formed that our water will always be safe and hazard-free for us to drink are indicative of how we tend to rely far too much on the bureaucratic assurances that are given to us by people who work in the government agency. Like our other natural resources, water is a valuable resource that we cannot take for granted or fail to consider in the context of supply.

Revised Version

After the health crisis in Walkerton, Ontario, all Canadians need to consider the facts about ongoing water safety. Our expectations that water will always be safe to drink indicate how we rely dangerously on bureaucratic, not scientific, assurances. Water, like our other natural resources, cannot be taken for granted as an endless or self-sustaining supply.

Commentary

Conciseness requires your elimination of unnecessary words and phrases. Delete clunky phrases such as “in terms of,” “about the question of,” “are indicative of,” and “to consider in the context of,” which clutter up your sentences, your potentially terse and crisp expression.

Remember that much redundancy also results from a hasty disregard for logic. Slowly reread and reconsider your work, asking yourself simply and sternly, what “things” are, in and of themselves? Since “bureaucratic assurances” in our sample paragraph must be, by definition, “given to us by people who work in the government agency,” you can

easily eliminate this “doubling” of expression by recognizing that the term “bureaucratic assurances” conveys your meaning already. Similarly, if you say, as in our paragraph, that water is “a valuable resource,” then, by definition “we cannot take for granted or fail to consider” its importance: calling water a “valuable resource” is fine by itself, and you can delete the unnecessary restatement of what that means.