
CHAPTER 1

OPTIMIZING SENTENCES FOR EFFICIENCY

"Minimalism", in the context of technical writing, is the art of writing more clearly by writing less.

That definition, rewritten the *wrong* way:

"Minimalism" is an artistic discipline that can appear in any medium, even technical writing. When writing technical documentation, you may want to use minimalism. You should write fewer words in order to reach your central point, but without the loss of useful or important information.

The first version, while terse, is better. It is simple, it states exactly the information the author wants to convey, it leaves no room for questions. This is typical of minimalism.

Advantages of minimalism are:

- Writing fewer words provide fewer opportunities for you to make writing mistakes.
- Readers are less likely to misinterpret the intent of a message when your writing is direct and concise.
- Maintenance and updates are easier when there is less to maintain and update.
- Translation of your writing to other languages is easier when the meaning of your writing is obvious.
- Tech editing is faster when there are fewer words to review.
- It is more efficient to write less to communicate more.

Implementing minimalism

Humans tend to think verbosely, so minimalism does not usually occur in a first draft. That's expected, but during your self-edit, look for sentences that use idiomatic phrases, "filler" words, or that restate a point that has already been made, and rewrite them using fewer words.

Here are some examples of how to use minimalism by rewriting verbose sentences:

Convert paragraphs to minimalism

Bad (21 words):

A static IP address should be set on the server in order to log in to it remotely from the client.

Better (12 words):

Set a static IP address on the server to enable remote login.

Bad (47 words):

The standard XYZ solution for the granularity concern these concerns would be XYZ Bundle Repository (XBR), but XBR failed to get traction in the market. Another example of a popular software system that relies on XYZ but choose to not rely on XBR is the Emacs editor.

Better (20 words):

Emacs is an XYZ-compliant editor allowing developers to create and modify XYZ bundles without installing XYZ Bundle Repository.

Ideally, minimalism doesn't just shorten a sentence, but makes the point of the sentence clearer. It allows the reader to focus on what is important.

Exercise

Rewrite each paragraph, bearing minimalism in mind:

1. Click on the **OK** button to confirm the action and close the dialogue box.
2. Look through each menu item to familiarize yourself with all the options available to you throughout the interface before attempting to utilize the API so that you have some idea of what functions users expect to have available to them.
3. Click on the **OX** button to confirm the action and close the dialogue box.
4. In the right panel, you should see that the **XYZ** view will show that the most recent task has been completed and is waiting for you to continue. In order to verify this, click the **OK** in the lower left corner of the interface in your web browser. This will display a verification message confirming that the test passed and that it is safe for you to continue to the next phase of the exercise.
5. As you will see later in this chapter, both the **foo** and **bar** applications work with a pipeline concept, which is sequential. However, you may want to use **foo** when it's available, since it also has the ability to trigger an exchange to multiple destinations simultaneously, utilizing parallel processing where possible.