

信息冗余

Redundancy

The Economist

听读系列



请多多点赞！谢谢大家 译文在评论区
公众号：狂奔的外刊 分享PDF链接

约翰逊 多即是多

信息冗余在写作和演讲中很有用。使用时机，
原因和方式如下

Johnson

More is more

Redundancy can be useful in writing and speech.
Here's when, why and how

Rain

bilibili 狂奔的外刊

1. “PLEASE RETURN your **tray tables** to their full **upright** and locked position.” “Remember to take all of your personal **belongings** with you when you leave the train.”



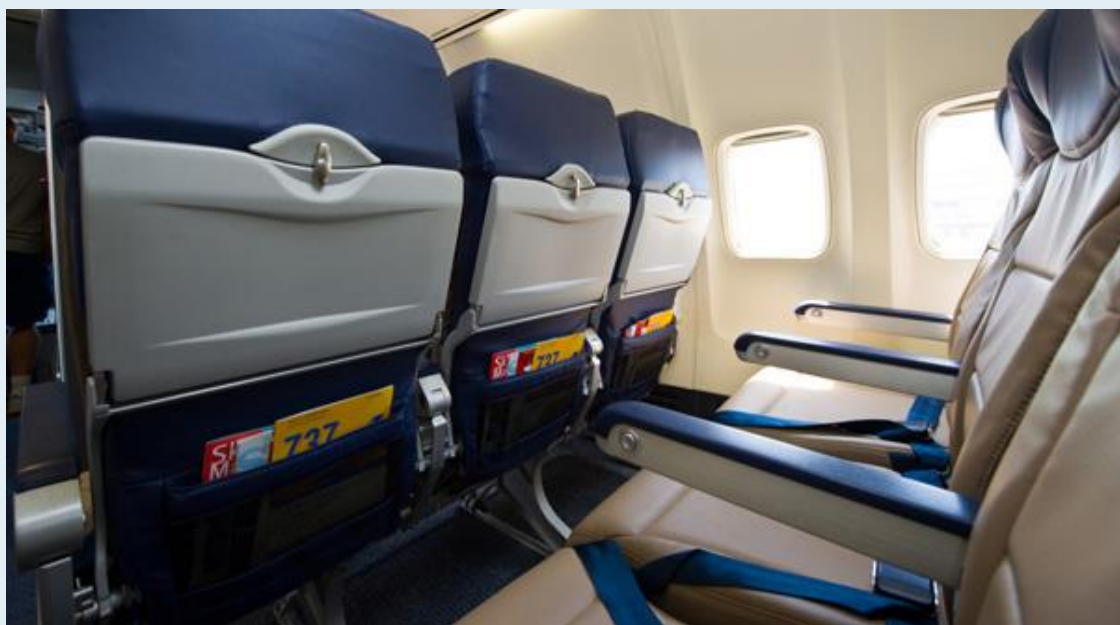
More is more 化用了英语俗语 **less is more** (*saying*) include only what is essential in order to create an effective product or result 少即是多; 以少见多; 简单就是美

tray table *noun* (火车或飞机座椅前的)折叠式餐桌
网络盘桌; 托盘桌; 小餐桌

upright /ˈʌpraɪt/ *adjective* placed in a vertical position 竖直的; 直立的; 垂直的

belongings /biˈlɒŋɪnz/ *noun* [pl.] the things that you own which can be moved, for example not land or buildings 动产; 财物

Something about writing announcements for public transport seems to bring out the wordiness in people. These instructions can be shortened to “Please put your trays up” and “Please take your things.”



announcement /əˈnaʊnsmənt/ **noun** [C] a spoken or written statement that informs people about sth (一项) 公告, 布告, 通告

public transport **noun** [U] the system of buses, trains, etc. provided by the government or by companies, which people use to travel from one place to another 公共交通; 公交制度

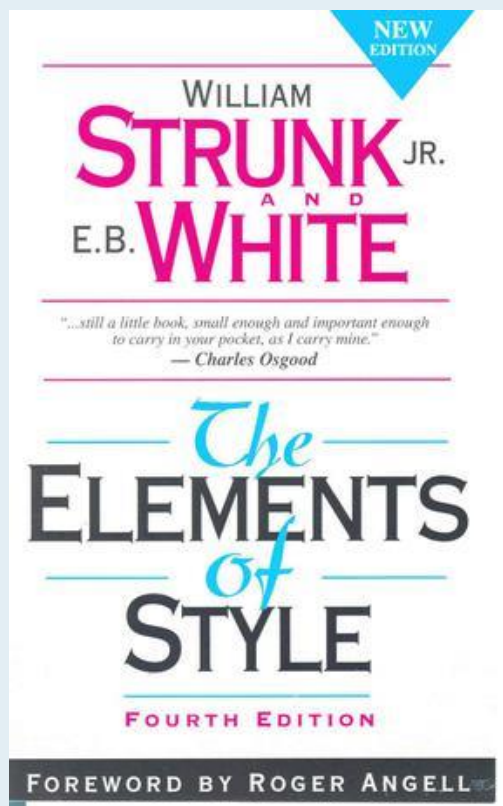
bring out to make sth appear 使显现; 使表现出

wordy /ˈwɜːdi/ **adjective** (usually disapproving) using too many words, especially formal ones 话多的; 冗长的; 啰嗦的

instruction /ɪnˈstrʌkʃ(ə)n/ **noun**
instructions [pl.] detailed information on how to do or use sth 用法说明; 操作指南

shorten /ˈʃɔːt(ə)n/ **verb** [T, I] to make sth shorter; to become shorter (使) 变短, 缩短

2. Redundancy is widely seen as a stylistic sin. “Omit needless words” is perhaps the least redundant statement of this view, made famous by “The Elements of Style”,



redundancy /rɪˈdʌnd(ə)nəsi/ *noun*

pl. re-dun-dancies [U, C, usually pl.] (*BrE*) the situation when sb has to leave their job because there is no more work available for them (因劳动力过剩而造成的) 裁员, 解雇

stylistic /staɪˈlɪstɪk/ *adjective* [only before

noun] connected with the style an artist uses in a particular piece of art, writing or music 风格上的; 文体上的

sin /sɪn/ *noun* [C, usually sing.] (*informal*) an action that people strongly disapprove of 过错; 过失; 恶行

omit /ə(ʊ)ˈmɪt/ *verb* (-tt-) (*formal*) to not include sth/sb, either deliberately or because you have forgotten it/them 删除; 忽略; 漏掉; 遗漏

The Elements of Style *noun* 《风格的要素》, 英文写作指导书

a **bestselling** **usage** **manual** published in 1959. In it, **E.B. White**, an **essayist** and novelist, attributed the **dictum** to his university English teacher, **William Strunk**.



best-seller /'best'selə/ **noun** a product, usually a book, which is bought by large numbers of people 畅销品; 畅销书

usage /'ju:sɪdʒ/ **noun** [U, C] the way in which words are used in a language (词语的) 用法, 惯用法

manual /'mænjʊ(ə)/ **noun** a book that tells you how to do or operate sth, especially one that comes with a machine, etc. when you buy it 使用手册; 说明书; 指南

E.B. White **noun** 埃尔文·布鲁克斯·怀特, 美国当代散文家、评论家, 《夏洛的网》

essayist /'eseɪɪst/ **noun** a person who writes essays to be published 论说文 (或小品文) 作者

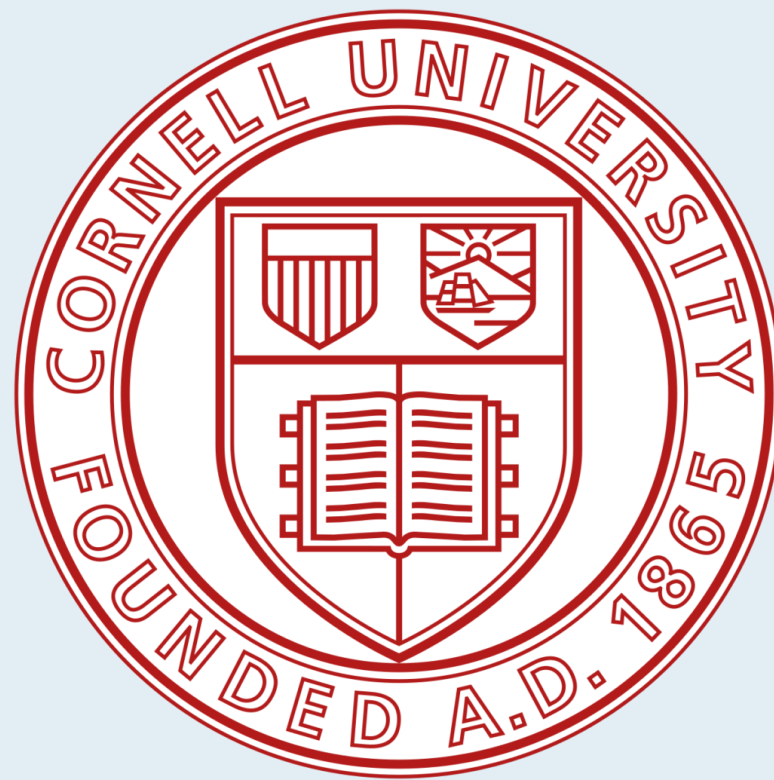
dictum /'dɪktəm/ **noun** a statement that expresses sth that people believe is always true or should be followed 名言; 格言

William Strunk **verb** 威廉·斯特伦克, 康奈尔大学博士, 英语系教授, 英语语法和写作文法方面的专家, 以著有畅销英文写作指导书《风格的要素》而闻名。的外刊

In the classroom, Strunk “omitted so many needless words” that he was often “left with nothing more to say, yet with time to fill”. So Strunk **resorted to** saying everything three times: “Omit needless words! Omit needless words! Omit needless words!”



resort to sth to make use of sth, especially sth bad, as a means of achieving sth, often because there is no other possible solution 诉诸; 求助于; 依靠



3. On **reflection**, though, did he really need to say that three times himself? If he had already said everything that was required, he could have let the class out early rather than repeating his call for **concision**. That he did so suggests there may **be more value in redundancy than meets the eye**. Language **scholars**, indeed, think it fulfils several functions.



reflection /rɪ'flekʃ(ə)n/ **noun** [U] careful thought about sth, sometimes over a long period of time 沉思; 深思; 审慎的思考

She decided **on reflection** to accept his offer after all. 经过审慎的思考, 她还是决定接受他的提议。

concise /kən'saɪs/ **adjective** giving only the information that is necessary and important, using few words 简明的; 简练的; 简洁的

be more to sth than meets the eye **noun** If there is more to something than meets the eye, it is more difficult to understand or involves more things than you thought at the beginning. 比开始认为的还难以应付; 比当初看上去的更复杂

scholar /'skɒlə/ **noun** a person who knows a lot about a particular subject because they have studied it in detail 学者

4. One, **hinted** at by Strunk's repetition, is learnability. Repetition, after all, is **reinforcement**. Languages that include the same piece of **grammatical** information in more than one way are probably more easily acquired by children, or indeed adults.

hint /hint/ **verb** [I, T] to suggest sth in an indirect way 暗示; 透露; 示意

reinforcement /riːɪn'fɔːsm(ə)nt/ **noun** [U, sing.] the act of making sth stronger, especially a feeling or an idea (感情或思想等的) 巩固, 加强, 强化

grammatical /grə'mætɪk(ə)l/ **adjective** connected with the rules of grammar 语法的; 文法的



repetition
repetition
repetition
repetition

For example, the -ed ending on the verb gives no new information in “Yesterday, he walked”, because “yesterday” already **situates** the event in the past. Many languages—**Mandarin**, for example—do not require such endings. In those, such as English, which do, the **doubling up** of signals may have developed to make them easier to learn.

situate /'sɪtʃueɪt/ **verb** ~ sth + adv./prep. to consider how an idea, event, etc. is related to other things that influence your view of it 将 ... 置于; 使联系

mandarin /'mændərɪn/ **noun** **Mandarin** [U] the standard form of Chinese, which is the official language of China 普通话

double up (on sth/with sb) (*informal*) to form a pair in order to do sth or to share sth 合用; 同享



5. Another **benefit** of redundancy can be seen on those trains and planes. These are noisy and **distracting** places where a **brusque** “Please take your things” may not be heard by all passengers. Redundancy makes a signal **robust**.



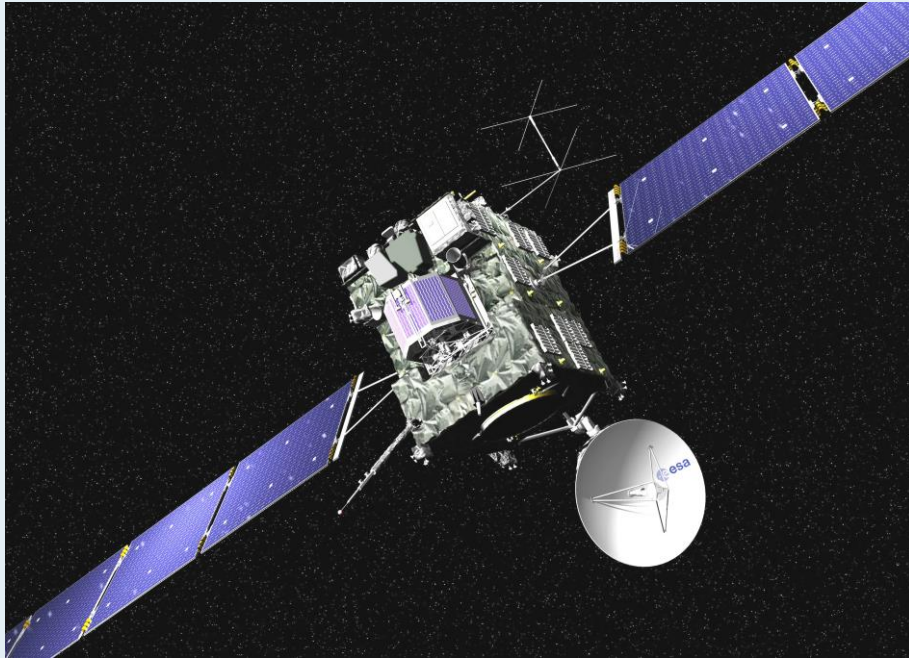
benefit /'benɪfɪt/ *noun* [U, C] an advantage that sth gives you; a helpful and useful effect that sth has 优势; 益处; 成效

distract /dɪ'strækt/ *verb* ~ sb/sth (from sth) to take sb's attention away from what they are trying to do 转移 (注意力) ; 分散 (思想) ; 使分心

brusque /brʊsk/ *adjective* using very few words and sounding rude 寡言而无礼的

robust /rə(ʊ)'bʌst/ *adjective* strong; able to survive being used a lot and not likely to break 结实的; 耐用的; 坚固的

For instance, **spacecraft** **beaming** digital messages to Earth include “**error-correction** **bits**”, redundancies in the signal that allow engineers back home to reconstruct the **inevitably** **degraded** **transmissions**. Here redundancy is a feature not a flaw.



spacecraft /'speɪskrɑːft/ **noun** *pl.* **space·craft** a vehicle that travels in space 航天器；宇宙飞船

beam /biːm/ **verb** [T] + **adv./prep.** to send radio or television signals over long distances using electronic equipment 发射（电波）；播送

error correction **noun** [U] (computing 计算机) a process by which a computer automatically corrects mistakes in data 纠错（计算机自动纠正数据错误）

bit /bɪt/ **noun** [C] the smallest unit of information used by a computer 比特，二进制位

inevitably /ɪn'evɪtəblɪ/ **adverb** as is certain to happen 不可避免地；必然地

degrade /dɪ'greɪd/ **verb** [T] ~ **sth** (*technical* 术语) to make sth become worse, especially in quality 降低，削弱（尤指质量）

transmission **noun** [U] the act or process of sending out an electronic signal or message or of broadcasting a radio or television programme （电子信号或信息的）发射，发送；（电台或电视节目的）播送 gili 狂奔的外刊

6. A recent study of **Dutch** and English confirmed this is true of human languages, too. It looked at how both languages handle sentences like “She gave the book to him”: **ie**, those with both a **direct object**, “the book”, and an indirect one, “him”. In both Dutch and English, word order is relatively fixed for the giver, thing given and **recipient**. But there are also ways of **emphasising** this information.

Dutch /dʌtʃ/ **noun** the main language spoken in the Netherlands, also spoken in Belgium 荷兰语

i.e. abbr. used to explain exactly what the previous thing that you have mentioned means (from Latin ‘id est’) 也就是，亦即（源自拉丁文 id est）

direct object noun (*grammar* 语法) a noun, noun phrase or pronoun that refers to a person or thing that is directly affected by the action of a verb 直接宾语

recipient /rɪˈsɪpiənt/ **noun** (*formal*) a person who receives sth 受方；接受者

emphasise /ˈemfəsaɪz/ **verb** to give special importance to sth 强调；重视；着重



The **pronoun** “She” is in the **nominative case**, marking it as the subject or giver. “Him” is in the **objective** case, making clear that it is an object (it is not “he”). Strictly, either the form of the pronouns or the word order could distinguish giver from recipient, but most such sentences in English and Dutch offer both.

Nominative / Objective
/ Possessive Pronouns

pronoun /'prəʊnaʊn/ **noun** (*grammar* 语法) a word that is used instead of a noun or noun phrase, for example *he, it, hers, me, them*, etc. 代词

nominative case **noun** 主格

nominative /'nɒmɪnətɪv/ **noun** (*grammar* 语法) (in some languages 用于某些语言) the form of a noun, a pronoun or an adjective when it is the subject of a verb 主格; 主格词

object /'ɒbdʒɪkt/ **noun** (*grammar* 语法) a noun, noun phrase or pronoun that refers to a person or thing that is affected by the action of the verb (called the **DIRECT OBJECT**), or that the action is done to or for (called the **INDIRECT OBJECT**) 宾语 (包括直接宾语、间接宾语)

7. Languages may even **adapt** to maintain an **optimal** level of redundancy. A thousand years ago, every English noun —“king”, say, or “Alfred”—changed forms, as “he” does to “him”, to show which role every word played in a sentence (subject, direct object and so on).

adapt /ə'dæpt/ **verb** [I, T] to change your behaviour in order to deal more successfully with a new situation 适应 (新情况)

optimal /'ɒptɪm(ə)l/ **adjective** = **OPTIMUM** [only before noun] the best possible; producing the best possible results 最佳的; 最适宜的



Over the centuries those endings disappeared, **potentially** making sentences **ambiguous**. The grammar of English responded by making word order, which had once been **fluid**, more **rigid**. And English still employs other features—such as the use of the preposition “to”, or the objective-case forms “him” and “her”—just in case.

potential /pə(ʊ)'tenʃ(ə)l/ **adjective** [only before noun] that can develop into sth or be developed in the future 潜在的；可能的

ambiguous /æm'bigjuəs/ **adjective** that can be understood in more than one way; having different meanings 模棱两可的；含混不清的

fluid /'fluːɪd/ **adjective** (*formal*) (of a situation 形势) likely to change; not fixed 易变的；不稳定的

rigid /'rɪdʒɪd/ **adjective** (*often disapproving*) (of rules, methods, etc. 规则、方法等) very strict and difficult to change 死板的；僵硬的



8. Another possible use of redundancy is simply to make listening or reading less **taxing**. If every possible word that can be removed is removed, so that every remaining one is absolutely crucial, listening and reading become stressful. You cannot let your mind **wander** for even a moment. Such **prose** is almost too dense with information; even a short passage of this kind would be **demanding** to read. Sometimes a little room to breathe **is no bad thing**.

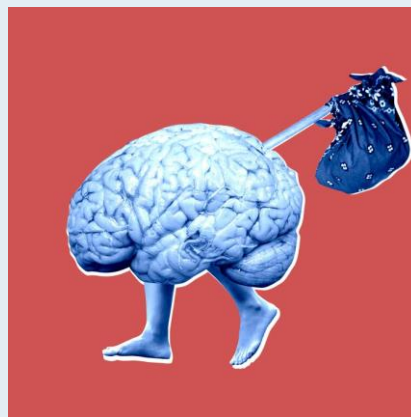
taxing /'tæksɪŋ/ **adjective** needing a great amount of physical or mental effort 繁重的; 费力的; 伤脑筋的

wander /'wɒndə/ **verb** [I] (of a person's mind or thoughts 人的思想或想法) to stop being directed on sth and to move without much control to other ideas, subjects, etc. 走神; 神志恍惚; (思想) 开小差

prose /prəʊz/ **noun** [U] writing that is not poetry 散文

demanding /dɪ'mɑːndɪŋ/ **adjective** (of a piece of work 工作) needing a lot of skill, patience, effort, etc. 要求高的; 需要高技能 (或耐性等) 的; 费力的

be no bad 'thing (that) ... used to say that although sth seems to be bad, it could have good results 并不是坏事; 或许是好事



9. Just a little, that is. The advice to keep it **trim** is still good **counsel**. **Blaise Pascal**, a French author of the 17th century, once apologised for a long letter by saying: “I have not had time to make it shorter.” Keeping things tight can be hard work for the writer, but it saves time for the reader, at least **up to a point**. Make your prose as **lean** as necessary to keep your reader reading—but not more.

trim /trim/ **adjective** neat and well cared for 整齐的; 精心照管的; 井然有序的

counsel /'kaʊns(ə)l/ **noun** [U, C] (*formal*) advice, especially given by older people or experts; a piece of advice (尤指年长者或专家的) 劝告, 忠告, 建议

Blaise Pascal **noun** 布莱士·帕斯卡, 法国数学家

up to a (certain) point to some extent; to some degree but not completely 在某种程度上

lean /li:n/ **adjective** (of organizations, etc. 机构等) strong and efficient because the number of employees has been reduced 精干的; 效率高的



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1. “PLEASE RETURN your tray tables to their full upright and locked position.” “Remember to take all of your personal belongings with you when you leave the train.” Something about writing announcements for public transport seems to bring out the wordiness in people. These instructions can be shortened to “Please put your trays up” and “Please take your things.”

“请收起您的折叠餐桌并将其锁定。”，“当你离开火车时，记得带走所有的私人物品。”公共交通公告似乎激发了人们啰嗦的本性。这些指示可以缩短为“请把你的托盘放好”和“请拿好你的东西”

2. Redundancy is widely seen as a stylistic sin. “Omit needless words” is perhaps the least redundant statement of this view, made famous by “The Elements of Style”, a bestselling usage manual published in 1959. In it, E.B. White, an essayist and novelist, attributed the dictum to his university English teacher, William Strunk.

信息冗余被广泛认为是一种文体错误。“省略不必要的词语”可能是这种观点中最不冗余的陈述，这句话因1959年出版的畅销书《风格的要素》而出名。在文章中，散文家兼小说家埃尔文·布鲁克斯·怀特将这句名言归功于他的大学英语老师威廉·斯特伦克。

In the classroom, Strunk “omitted so many needless words” that he was often “left with nothing more to say, yet with time to fill”. So Strunk resorted to saying everything three times: “Omit needless words! Omit needless words! Omit needless words!”

在课堂上，斯特伦克“省略了太多不必要的单词”，以至于他经常“没什么可说的，但还有许多时间去填满”。因此，斯特伦克把每件事都重复三遍：“省略不必要的词语！省略不必要的词语！省略不必要的词语！”

3. On reflection, though, did he really need to say that three times himself? If he had already said everything that was required, he could have let the class out early rather than repeating his call for concision. That he did so suggests there may be more value in redundancy than meets the eye. Language scholars, indeed, think it fulfils several functions.

然而，仔细想想，他真的需要自己说三遍吗？如果他已经说了所有需要说的话，他本可以早点让全班同学出去，而不是重复他要求简洁的呼吁。他这样做表明，信息冗余的价值可能比看起来更大。事实上，语言学者认为它有几个功能。

4. One, hinted at by Strunk's repetition, is learnability. Repetition, after all, is reinforcement. Languages that include the same piece of grammatical information in more than one way are probably more easily acquired by children, or indeed adults.

斯特伦克的重复暗示了一点，那就是可学性。毕竟，重复是一种强化。以多种方式包含同一条语法信息的语言，它可能更容易被儿童或成年人习得。

For example, the -ed ending on the verb gives no new information in “Yesterday, he walked”, because “yesterday” already situates the event in the past. Many languages—Mandarin, for example—do not require such endings. In those, such as English, which do, the doubling up of signals may have developed to make them easier to learn.

例如，动词的-ed词缀在“Yesterday, he walked”中没有给出新的信息，因为“昨天”已经将事件置于过去。许多语言——比如汉语——不需要这样的词缀。在像英语这样的语言中，信号的重叠可能是为了使它们更容易学习。

5. Another benefit of redundancy can be seen on those trains and planes. These are noisy and distracting places where a brusque “Please take your things” may not be heard by all passengers. Redundancy makes a signal robust. For instance, spacecraft beaming digital messages to Earth include “error-correction bits”, redundancies in the signal that allow engineers back home to reconstruct the inevitably degraded transmissions. Here redundancy is a feature not a flaw.

信息冗余的另一个好处可以在火车和飞机上看到。这些地方嘈杂，让人分心，粗鲁的“请拿好你的东西”可能不会被所有乘客听到。冗余使信息传播更加稳定。例如，向地球发送数字信息的宇宙飞船包括“纠错信息”，即信号中的冗余信息，这使得工程师们可以回去重建不可避免的传输损耗。在这里，信息冗余是一个特征，而不是缺陷。

6. A recent study of Dutch and English confirmed this is true of human languages, too. It looked at how both languages handle sentences like “She gave the book to him”: ie, those with both a direct object, “the book”, and an indirect one, “him”. In both Dutch and English, word order is relatively fixed for the giver, thing given and recipient. But there are also ways of emphasising this information.

最近一项关于荷兰语和英语的研究证实，人类语言也是如此。它研究了两种语言如何处理类似“She gave the book to him”这样的句子：它既有直接宾语“the book”，又有间接宾语“him”。在荷兰语和英语中，词序对于给予者、物品和接受者来说是相对固定的。但是也有强调这些信息的方法。

The pronoun “She” is in the nominative case, marking it as the subject or giver. “Him” is in the objective case, making clear that it is an object (it is not “he”). Strictly, either the form of the pronouns or the word order could distinguish giver from recipient, but most such sentences in English and Dutch offer both.

代词“She”是主格，表示主语或给予者。“Him”在宾格中，明确它是一个客体(它不是“he”)。严格来说，无论是代词的形式还是词序都可以区分给予者和接受者，但在英语和荷兰语中，大多数此类句子两者皆有。

7. Languages may even adapt to maintain an optimal level of redundancy. A thousand years ago, every English noun —“king”, say, or “Alfred”—changed forms, as “he” does to “him”, to show which role every word played in a sentence (subject, direct object and so on).

语言甚至可以不断适应以保持最佳水平的信息冗余。一千年前，每一个英语名词——“king”、或“Alfred”——都改变了形式，就像“he”对“him”一样来显示每个单词在句子中扮演的角色(主语、直接宾语等等)。

Over the centuries those endings disappeared, potentially making sentences ambiguous. The grammar of English responded by making word order, which had once been fluid, more rigid. And English still employs other features—such as the use of the preposition “to”, or the objective-case forms “him” and “her”—just in case.

几个世纪后，这些结尾消失了。这可能会使句子变得模糊不清。英语语法让曾经不固定的词序变得更加死板。英语如今依旧使用其他特征——比如介词“to”，或者宾语从句“him”和“her”——以防万一。

8. Another possible use of redundancy is simply to make listening or reading less taxing. If every possible word that can be removed is removed, so that every remaining one is absolutely crucial, listening and reading become stressful. You cannot let your mind wander for even a moment. Such prose is almost too dense with information; even a short passage of this kind would be demanding to read. Sometimes a little room to breathe is no bad thing.

信息冗余的另一个可能用途是
让听力或阅读不那么费力。如果
把每一个可以去掉的单词都去掉，
剩下的每一个单词就变得绝对关
键，听力和阅读就变得很有压力。
你一刻也不能让自己的思想开小
差。这样的散文信息太过密集；
即使是短文也变得很难读懂。有
时候给自己一点喘息的空间并不
是坏事。

9. Just a little, that is. The advice to keep it trim is still good counsel. Blaise Pascal, a French author of the 17th century, once apologised for a long letter by saying: “I have not had time to make it shorter.” Keeping things tight can be hard work for the writer, but it saves time for the reader, at least up to a point. Make your prose as lean as necessary to keep your reader reading—but not more.

在很少的程度上，保持简洁仍然是很好的建议。17世纪法国作家布莱士·帕斯卡曾为一封长信道歉说：“我没时间把它写短。”对作者来说，保持内容紧凑可能是一项艰巨的工作，但至少在某程度上，它为读者节省了时间。让你的文章尽可能简洁，让你的读者继续阅读，而不是更为啰嗦。