Concise Writing

Writing academic papers in a clear and concise manner can be a daunting task, especially with the sheer amount of information available. That said, learning to consolidate information in an organized, succinct manner will improve communication in university as well as other areas of life.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before getting started:

1) **What is your main point?**
   The most important part of any paper is the thesis statement, which is the main argument or piece of information that you want to convey to your reader. Every part of your paper should connect to your thesis statement. Constructing your thesis statement before you actually begin writing will help you organize your paper and decide what information to include.

2) **Who is your reader?**
   Is your paper being written for an expert in your field or a member of the general public? Identifying who will be reading your paper is essential for determining how much explanation, background information, and technical language to include.

As you are writing your paper or editing the finished product, try to be mindful of the following suggestions:

A) **Refrain from using language like "In this paper I will discuss …" or "the topic of this essay is …"**
   It is common to see this kind of 'presentation' language at the beginning and end of papers, but often it is unnecessary and can be disruptive to the paper's flow. It is prudent to omit these phrases and directly and clearly state what it is you want to say.

   Original: *"For this paper, I will discuss the nature of good and evil in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and I will do this by focusing on both Dr. Frankenstein and his monster".* (Word count: 30)

   Improved: *"In Frankenstein, Mary Shelley highlights the nature of good and evil by focusing on Dr. Frankenstein and his monster".* (Word count: 19)

B) Combine small, similar sentences.

Although short sentences can be an effective way to clearly and succinctly express yourself, combining related thoughts can improve the flow of ideas and reduce your word count.

Original: *"Killer whales are apex predators in their marine ecosystems. They feed on many different animals, including seals, octopuses, and even sharks. They travel in pods".* (Word count: 25)

Improved: *"Killer whales are apex predators that travel in pods, feeding on seals, octopuses, and sharks".* (Word count: 15)

C) Avoid the use of repetitive or redundant language.

Do not include information that is strongly implied, or that has already been introduced.

In the last example 'marine ecosystems' was removed from the original sentence, as it was deemed redundant since the habitat of killer whales is well established. In the next example, try to identify any redundant or repetitive language before reading the improved sentence.

Original: "Prince George social workers are invaluable to the citizens of Prince George, providing social services to some of the most vulnerable citizens in the city". (Word count: 25)

Improved: "Social workers are invaluable to Prince George, advocating for some of our most vulnerable citizens". (Word count: 15)

References to the city of Prince George were removed as it only needed to be stated once, and writing that social workers provide social services is vague and already well understood, so that was also removed. Furthermore, as there is no major difference between 'supporting' and 'advocating for' someone, only one of these words is needed.