

Grade 7 Playlist: Using Precise and Concise Language

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.3.A:

- Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.

Welcome

“It was 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon.” “The robot that the engineer built was a brand-new innovation.” What is wrong with these sentences? Is it necessary to state that 3:00 p.m. is “in the afternoon,” or that anything described as an “innovation” is also “brand-new”? Although the sentences communicate information to the reader, they use too many words when fewer words and more precise language would be more effective.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely.
- recognize and eliminate wordiness and redundancy.

Review**Key Terms**

- Language that is **precise** is stated clearly. Precise language says exactly what it is meant to say.
- Concise** language states what is important while using as few words as possible.
- Wordiness** is using too many words to make a statement that could be made with fewer words.
- Redundancy** is a type of wordiness. It is the unnecessary repetition of words and phrases that have the same meaning.

Exploring the Standard

It is important to use language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely. The ideas discussed in a text should be stated clearly so that the reader cannot make the mistake of misinterpreting the ideas and information. The language should not include any words that are unnecessary. Wordiness and redundancy can not only frustrate readers but also cause them to misunderstand the author’s message.

A Closer Look: Using Precise Language

If language is too vague and too broad, the author’s message will not be clear, and readers may be confused or uninterested. Read the following description of a living room. What picture does this description create in the reader’s mind?

Example 1

The living room was good. It contained furniture. The walls were painted a color. The room had windows. On the floor was a soft material.

The vague language in the description may cause the reader to be confused or bored. What does the author mean by saying that the living room was “good”? Does this mean that the room was comfortable, well lit, or nicely decorated? What type of furniture did the room have? What color were the walls? By using more precise language, the author can clearly describe the room to the reader, and the reader will be more engaged.

Read the following example, which revises the sentences to be more precise.



Example 2

The living room was cozy and inviting. It contained a brown sofa and two smaller chairs. The walls were painted yellow. Three windows faced the sofa. The floor was covered in a thick carpet.

Caution!

In an attempt to be precise, do not use language that is overly specific and thus unfamiliar to readers. Read the two sentences in the following example.

Example 3

Nancy deliberated on the complication for several days before resolving to act.
Nancy thought about the problem for several days before deciding to act.

These two sentences express the same idea, but the first sentence uses more specific language. Although the words *deliberated* and *complication* are more precise than *thought* and *problem*, they may be unfamiliar to most readers. Even a fairly familiar word such as *resolving* is not as clear as *deciding*.

Read!

For more information on using precise language, read the following:

- <https://www.roanestate.edu/owl/PreciseLanguage.html>

A Closer Look: Recognizing Wordiness and Redundancy

When trying to emphasize ideas, some writers may mistakenly use too many or unnecessary words, creating wordiness and redundancy. Read the sentence in the following example.

Example 4

All things considered, the bus has a tendency to leave the bus stop early in the morning before all of the students who ride the bus arrive, so it is important to get to the bus stop early and not be late.

The writer wants to emphasize the importance of getting to the bus stop on time. However, the writer has used too many words. The following table identifies wordy or redundant phrases and offers an explanation for each.

| Phrases | Explanation |
|--|---|
| "All things considered" | This phrase does not have a meaningful purpose in the sentence. |
| "has a tendency to" | This phrase could be replaced with the word <i>often</i> . |
| "Early in the morning" "before all of the students who ride the bus arrive" | These two phrases do not mean the same thing, but they are close in meaning. It is not necessary to include both. |
| "Get to the bus stop early" "not be late" | These two phrases have nearly the same meaning. Both are not needed. |
| "All of the students who ride the bus" | This phrase could be replaced with one word. A word like <i>passengers</i> would be more concise. |

