**Succinct Writing and Dealing with Jargon**

**Post-Class Activities**

The activities included here are designed to give you more hands-on practice in improving your writing by making it more succinct and easy to follow. The activities serve as a follow-up to some of the skills you learned in the pre and in-class activities for this topic, while introducing some new, more specific guidelines.

**Question 1 (6 marks)**

When you edit your work, it is a good idea to do it on a sentence-by-sentence basis. In terms of succinctness, the best sentences are those that do not contain any more words than are required to get your point across. Consider some commonly used ‘wordy phrases’ in Table 1 below. All of these can be shortened without losing their meaning; it is your task to come up with succinct, **one-word** alternatives.

**Table 1: Try to come up with simpler, shorter alternatives to these wordy phrases. Use just one word as your alternative for the wordy phrases below (A, B, C, D, E and F).**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Wordy Phrase** | **Succinct Alternative** |
| **A: Until such time as…**  |  |
| **B: An appreciable number of…** |  |
| **C: In the event of…** |  |
| **D: To cut a long story short…** |  |
| **E: With the exception of…** |  |
| **F: At the present time…** |  |

**Question 2 (7 marks)**

Another way of improving your work is to replace overly complex words with simpler ones. Although different language is suitable for different audiences, you should never be afraid to write something as simply and clearly as possible.

In this question, you need to identify and then replace the **seven** unnecessarily complex/potentially ambiguous words (1 mark for each word that is correctly identified **and** replaced with a suitable alternative). Copy and paste the paragraph before bolding the unnecessarily complex words. Then, copy and paste again and make your changes to the bolded words. *Hint: If you correctly identify an overly complex word but do not come up with a good alternative, you will score a ½ mark for that word.*

Having failed to make any demonstrable progress with our DNA techniques literature review, we started Thursday’s class with less zeal than we had the previous one. Although we were initially excited by the chance to read about such important science, we were soon deflated when we realized the profundity of the background material that we would have to dissolve into something more palatable for our classmates. Nobody wanted to choose an easy topic for dissemination at first, but we soon realized why reporting technical science is so challenging.

**Question 3 (4 marks)**

Read the following sentences and try to spot the **four** words that are ambiguous in some way (and which should be changed when editing, 1 mark for each word that is correctly identified **and** replaced with a suitable alternative). Copy and paste the paragraph before bolding the ambiguous words. Then, copy and paste again and make your changes to the bolded words. *Hint: If you correctly identify an ambiguous word but do not come up with a good alternative, you will score a ½ mark for that word.*

Last week, we were flying. Mike’s discovery with the new compound put us ahead of schedule. However, we still have to solve the problem of the funny smell that arises when we burn the compound. We do not know how to do this and our self-belief is low. Such an unwanted evaporation is a particularly challenging psychological element of the research process.

**Question 4 (8 marks)**

The final question in this post-class set of exercises is designed to make you think logically about editing your work, and to demonstrate what you have learned in this unit.

When producing a final draft of writing, you should aim to make sure all sentences:

1. Are written succinctly
2. Are free from ambiguous words
3. Are free from overly fancy words and redundant modifiers
4. Deal with jargon by either removing it entirely or by explaining its meaning (using parentheses, or commas)

The paragraph below fails on all of these levels. It is your task to re-write it so as to address the problems (8 marks). You can change the text considerably but to score highly, you must ensure that your version gets the same message across as the original and uses a similar (or fewer) number of words. *Hint: There are 2 marks available for each of the four things you need to address (listed above).*

We are often warned by our instructors and peers that we should try to keep up to date with our assignments, but I personally know lots of students who are loath to begin working on these until the last possible moment. Nerves in the hippocampus are thought by researchers to be responsible for stimulating emotions, such as lethargy. This malaise can often manifest itself as a passive serenity in students, which can be very frustrating to instructors. However, to their credit, these same students, who seem to be making pedestrian progress at the early stage of a course, often motor when deadlines begin to mount up. The final outcome, however, is often regret, as these students feel they could have achieved higher grades with a little more preparation, which presents a challenge to pedagogical researchers to design ways of encouraging better time management.