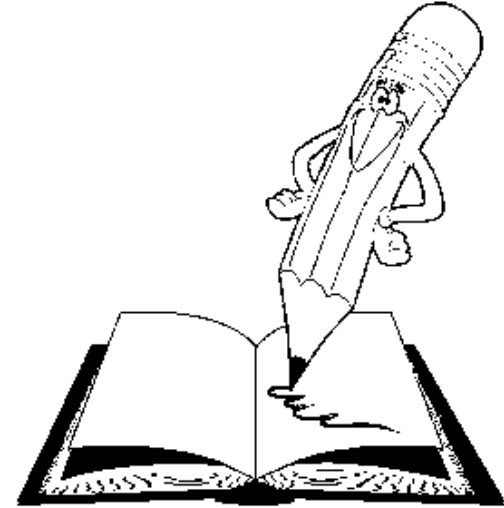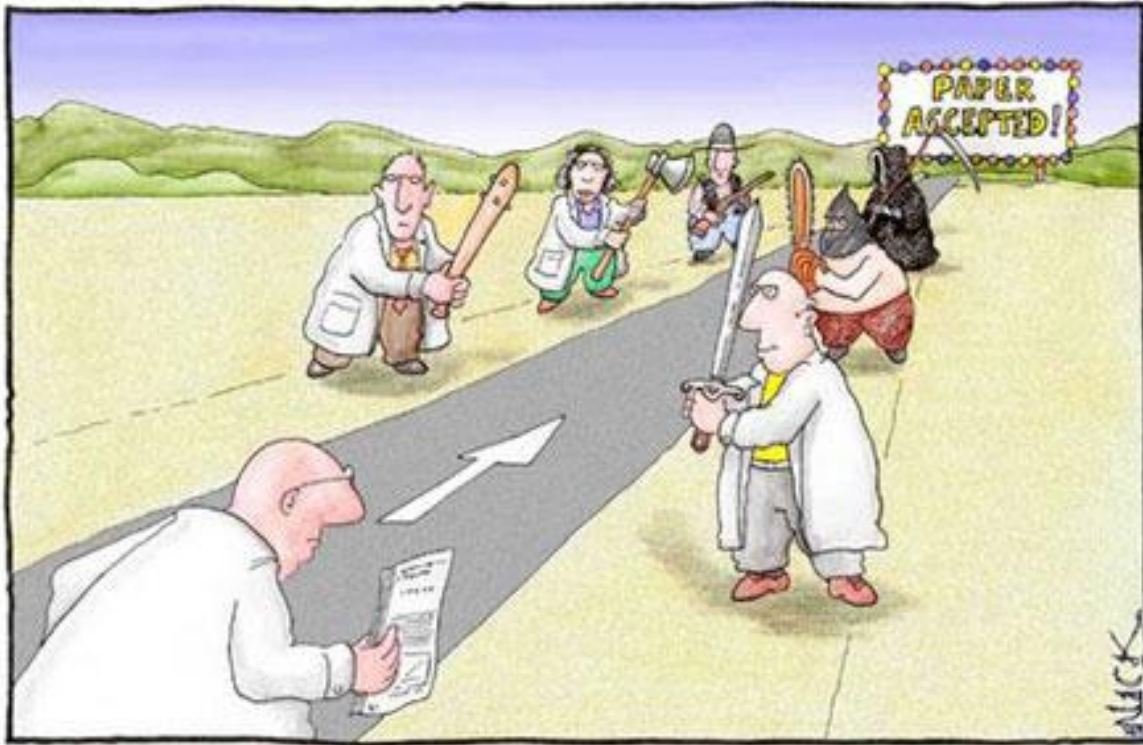# *Concise Style*

A.K.A. Avoiding Wordiness

Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

How can I make my writing more concise?

1. Avoid clutter
2. Omit words that add no meaning
3. Select strong, powerful words

X Rule 1: Avoid excess or "clutter"

Using the fewest number of words to make the point is always best

X Rule 1: Avoid excess or "clutter"

❑ <u>One word can often replace phrases. Use a thesaurus</u>!

Quick! What's another word for Thesaurus?

Quick! Replace these phrases with one word.

- At this point in time =
- **Now**

Quick! Replace these phrases with one word.

- In a great many instances =
- **Often**

Quick! Replace these phrases with one word.

- Has the ability to =
- **Can**

Quick! Replace these phrases with one word.

- Has control of =
- **Controls**

Quick! Replace these phrases with one word.

- Makes impact =
- **Impacts**

Quick! Replace these phrases with one word.

- Has an effective =
- **Effectively**

X Rule 1: Avoid excess or "clutter"

❑ Avoid **helping verbs**, unnecessary **verb phrases with infinitives** (to + verb), and **prepositional phrases**

Quick! Revise these sentences.

- **Bad:** Parents **have to lay down** rules **in order to** establish expectations.

- **Better:** Parents must establish expectations through rules.

Quick! Revise these sentences.

- **Bad:** Felicia **is going to try out** for the play.
- **Better:** Felicia will audition for the play.

Quick! Revise these sentences.

- **Bad:** All **of the advisers for the president** provided opinions **in writing**.

- **Better:** The president's advisers provided written opinions.

X Rule 1: Avoid excess or "clutter"

❑ Use adjectives sparingly. When to use them?

- When appealing to senses (spicy, raw)
- When suggesting specific quantities (few)

X Rule 2: Omit useless or unnecessary words...

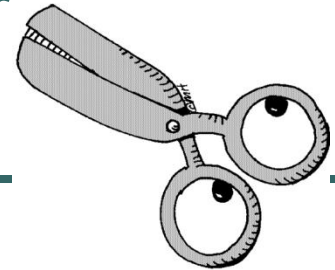that detract from your point and add nothing to the sentence's meaning.

X Rule 2: Omit useless or unnecessary words...

- **Incorrect:** I personally think that Alicia is wrong.
- Your writing = your thoughts. They are personal. Delete *personally*.
- **Correct:** Alicia is wrong.

X Rule 2: Omit useless or unnecessary words...

- **Incorrect:** Margo returned back to her house.
- Which word is **redundant**?
- **Correct:** Margo returned home.

X Rule 2: Omit useless or unnecessary words...

- **Words to eliminate:**

Very

Little

Pretty (as in pretty late)

Kind of

Really

A lot/lots of

Stuff

Sort of

The fact that

In order to

There is

There are

There was

There were

X Rule 3: Use strong, powerful, effective words.

❑ Use nouns & verbs that express exact meanings without modifiers (adjectives/adverbs) or phrases

X Rule 3: Use strong, powerful, effective words.

- **Bad:** Morning drivers cause dirty skies, lots of traffic, and angry people

- **Better:** Commuters cause pollution, traffic jams, and frustrations.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

X Rule 3: Use strong, powerful, effective words.

❑ Choose strong words that have powerful **connotations** and **denotations**.

- Connotation: feelings or impressions implied by a word

- Denotation: dictionary definition

What does this sentence say to you?

- Amy **liked** Eliza's haircut.
- Amy **coveted** Eliza's haircut.
- Amy **yearned for** Eliza's haircut.

What does this sentence say to you?

- Eliza **liked** Amy's brother.
- Eliza **adored** Amy's brother.
- Eliza **worshipped** Amy's brother.