

## Correcting wordiness, vagueness, and awkwardness.

### **Instructions:**

The following paragraphs contain wordiness, vague statements, and awkward phrasings. The word count is listed at the top of the paragraph. The goal of the assignment is to re-write the paragraph in such a way as to cut down the word count and also make the paragraph more clear. Vague statements can be cut outright. However, specific evidence and primary source quotations should be kept. The goal is to practice cutting the paragraph down as much as possible without losing key arguments or details.

The following paragraphs come from student work and are not necessarily *great* paragraphs. They do not necessarily have strong topic sentences or strong conclusions. You will want to note this as you re-write them.

In my example for the first paragraph, I have attempted to cut out vague, wordy, and awkward statements, but have not attempted to place a stronger topic sentence or conclusion. But this is something else that you can do.

Without knowing much about the content (20th century authoritarianism), see if you can also develop a better topic sentence cutting out the wordiness.

Writing is re-writing. Even in my example paragraph, there are elements that I would go back and fix.

*You will need to go sentence by sentence, but also two or three sentences at a time, and you will want to think about the paragraph as a whole. Doing this assignment properly will take time. Do not make the mistake of cleaning up one sentence and thinking that sentence is perfect. It may require alterations in order to eliminate wordiness elsewhere.*

Doing this assignment (with the intent to learn and improve) with material in which you are unfamiliar may really help you recognize the wordiness in your paper and your partner's paper in the material that you are more familiar.

Paragraphs to fix wordy, awkward, and vague statements.

***Paragraph 1 (215 words)***

Joseph Stalin was born into a religious family that forced him into an ecclesiastical school at an early age to follow his father's footsteps as a priest. It was here that Stalin developed his disdain for religion stating later that he was "raised in a poor priest-ridden household" where he was "damaged by violence" after his father beat him mercilessly. Following the five years that Stalin was enrolled in the Orthodox seminary, he renounced his religion. The experiences of his schooling and the beatings were the roots of Stalin's hostility towards religion that he would retain even when he became the leader of the USSR. To more efficiently solidify his control over the USSR, Joseph Stalin imposed a law outlawing all religion. The law, referred to as the "Laws on Religious Associations," imposed restrictions and laws limiting and suppressing all religions, including the barring of religious garb on any priests. These laws were argued for by the logic of limiting the impact of the Church's hold on the USSR. Once the laws passed, a new work week was put into place on the Soviet calendar, transitioning to a 6 day work week. These were meant to force work on Sunday instead of attending church. The new work schedule was enforced by threat of truancy.

***Revised (117 words)***

*Originally "raised in a poor priest-ridden household" where he was "damaged by violence" through merciless beatings and forced into an ecclesiastical school to follow his father as a priest, Joseph Stalin developed disdain for religion and renounced his Orthodox fate after five years at seminary. Stalin retained his hostility toward religion when he became the leader of the USSR and imposed anti-religious laws in order to solidify his political control. To limit the Church's hold on the USSR, these "Laws on Religious Associations," limited and suppressed all religions by barring religious garbs on priests and enforced truancy laws on the new six-day work week in order to force work over attending church on Sunday.*

***Topic Sentence: Stalin's hatred of religion was rooted in his childhood experiences, but rather than just a form of retribution, Stalin's harsh laws against religion helped solidified his political power.***

***Paragraph 2 (293 words)***

Lenin established a single party state in Russia by first using popular support; the Bolsheviks later transitioned to force, augmenting Lenin's campaign to establish a single party state. Lenin chiefly gained support through the use of propaganda. In his exile, originally, he used very thin pieces of tissue paper to disseminate his views as it was financially suitable and easy to distribute. Lenin famously said, "In with the new, out with the old" and he was the new. As eighty percent of the populace living in rural areas was illiterate, Lenin created simplistic propaganda. An example of this is an illustration of a happy peasant under Lenin while a sad one under the czar. Additionally, this new era of propaganda was the first time bright colors were used in Russia, adding to its attraction. Much of the lower class was influenced by Lenin's propaganda as it was those people who previously sought reform and did not achieve it to the extent they wished through the Provisional Government. In April 1917, Lenin delivered his "April Thesis," a series of directives for the ongoing revolutionary effort. The Theses were published by the newspaper, *Pravda* and later, in June, 100,000 copies of the *Pravda* were sold, depicting the mass spread of Lenin's ideas. The second way Lenin gained popular support was through Komsomol, a communist youth organization. Instituted in 1918, this organization aimed to transform the youth (beginning at age 14) into ideal communists, in the image of Lenin. The youth were rewarded based on the merit of emulating Lenin, demonstrating that acting and leaving like Lenin were admirable traits, deserving of an award. Lenin, as leader of the Bolshevik Party, elevated himself and especially popular support of him by distributing propaganda and instituting the Komsomol.

***Paragraph 3 (264 words)***

Stalin manipulated the media before he gained leadership of Russia to bring himself into power. He did this at the very beginning of the Stalin era. Stalin used the media to make it seem like he was Lenin's first choice as successor. Stalin was not Lenin's right-hand man, Trotsky was. Trotsky was present and was a frontman throughout much of Lenin's rule, while Stalin was not a prominent leader in Russia yet. Stalin snaked his way closer to Lenin, so he could be appointed as the successor to him, but Lenin recommended Stalin be removed from his position as General Secretary of the Russian Communist Party's Central Committee, in Lenin's Testament. However, Stalin suppressed the release of Lenin's Testament with the help of Kamenev and Zinoviev. Stalin was able to move on from Lenin's Testament because of how he orchestrated Lenin's funeral. Stalin made Lenin's funeral everything he did not want it to be; Stalin turned it into a public affair. This funeral turned Lenin into a symbol for communism. This is the first way he utilized the incorporation of propaganda into media. The second way he utilized it was making sure Trotsky was absent from Lenin's funeral. Stalin planned the funeral while Trotsky was away at caucus, because Stalin knew how Trotsky's absence would be perceived. Trotsky's absence allowed for Stalin to seem as if he was closer to Lenin than Trotsky was. Stalin turned Lenin into a symbol for communism, so who by association he is a symbol for it too. Stalin manipulated Lenin's funeral to begin his ascent to power.

**Paragraph 4 (84 words) (Don't forget to cut out sentences that are vague or hypothetical.)**

Authoritarian/single party states are difficult to create. For a leader to have complete totalitarian control often requires force, deception and harsh policies. However, force alone cannot establish such a state. The leader must have popular support and be in favor by the people, at least at the beginning of his establishment. Popular support is vital to the creation of a single party state, however, once that support lessens as a reaction to the policies and conditions, force is need to keep totalitarian rule.