Avoiding Wordiness—The Red Flag List

* **Participles**

In most circumstances, you can avoid the use of participles.  Always try to shoot for the simple tense of a verb.  Participles include:

**have, had, will, will have, should** to name a few.

**Have/ had**—Simple past

* If you ~~have had~~ someone book travel for you…
* If someone booked travel for you

**Will**—Simple present

* When you click **OK,** a new window ~~will~~ open.
* When you click **OK,** a new window opens.

**Should**—Simple present

* Departments ~~should~~ check peak times before going to the Campus Card office.
* Check peak times before going to the Campus Card office.
* **Prepositions**

Circle the Prepositions. Too many prepositions can drain all the action out of a sentence. Get rid of the prepositions, and find a strong active verb to make the sentence direct:

* In this passage is an example of the use of the rule of justice in argumentation.
* This passage exemplifies argumentation using the rule of justice.
* **Verbs instead of noun clauses**

Verbs give your writing more impact than heavy-sounding noun phrases.

* Use "discuss" instead of "have a discussion"
* “Have a meeting" (meet)
* "Give consideration to" (consider)
* "Be of concern to" (concern)
* **That, who, and which clauses into phrases**

Using a clause to convey meaning that could be presented in a phrase or even a word contributes to wordiness. Convert modifying clauses into phrases or single words when possible:

* The report, *which was released recently…* vs. The recently released report
* All applicants *who are interested in the job* must… vs. All job applicants must
* The system *that is most efficient and accurate*... vs. The most efficient and accurate system.
* **Other keywords include:**

**Not**—Often times when “not” is used, there’s one word that can replace what it’s negating:

* If your group is ~~not eligible~~…
* If your group is ineligible…

**To be**—Avoid any form of the verb, “to be.”  This is passive tense and we want to make our language action-oriented.

* Once the form ~~is filled~~ out…
* Once you fill out the form…
* Complete the form and…
* A campus ID card ~~is required~~ for parking permit requests.
* Parking Services requires a campus ID card for parking permit requests.