



Redundant, Expendable, and Incomparable Words and Phrases Quiz by Laura King, MA, ELS

Directions: Edit the following sentences, eliminating redundant and expendable words and phrases. Also, make sure that incomparable words stand alone. For example, do not use superlative or comparative modifiers with words such as “absolute” or “original.”

1. The rash on his skin was red in color and rough in texture.

ANSWER:

The rash was red and rough.

Editor’s Note: All rashes are on the skin; therefore, *on his skin* is redundant. Red is obviously a color and rough a texture; therefore, *in color* and *in texture* are redundant (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print).

2. It is interesting to note that this time period, although brief in duration, produced the majority of survey responses.

ANSWER:

This period, although brief, produced the most survey responses.

Editor’s Note: *It is interesting to note that* is expendable, *time period* and *brief in duration* are redundant, and *majority of* is wordy and should be changed to *most* (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print; §11.2.2, Expendable Words and Circumlocution, pp 406-407 in print).

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3. Due to the fact that the woman was slightly pregnant, the physician opted not to perform the x-ray examination.

ANSWER:

Because the woman was pregnant, the physician opted not to perform the x-ray examination.

Editor's Note: *Due to the fact that* is wordy and should be changed to *because*. *Pregnant* is an incomparable (absolute) word that should not be preceded by a superlative or comparative modifier (§11.2.2, Expendable Words and Circumlocution, pp 406-407 in print; §11.2.3, Incomparable Words, p 407 in print).

4. Similar results were also obtained for 4 out of the 5 patients.

ANSWER:

Similar results were obtained for 4 of the 5 patients

Editor's Note: If the results are similar, then *also* is redundant. *Out of* is also redundant and should be changed to *of* (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print).

5. As a general rule, we do not comment on the future plans of the organization.

ANSWER:

As a rule, we do not comment on the plans of the organization.

Editor's Note: All rules are general just as all plans are future, so *general* and *future* are redundant (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print).

6. We describe herein the results of the randomized controlled trial performed by Courant et al, which were uniformly consistent with the results of earlier randomized controlled trials.

ANSWER:

We describe the results of the randomized controlled trial performed by Courant et al, which were consistent with the results of earlier randomized controlled trials.

Editor's Note: Obviously, the results are being described herein; therefore, *herein* is redundant. If something is consistent, it is also uniform; therefore, *uniformly* is redundant (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print).



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7. When totaling up the sum of the survey responses, the investigators learned that the positive responses were fewer in number than expected.

ANSWER:

When totaling the survey responses, the investigators learned that the positive responses were fewer than expected.

Editor's Note: The phrase *totaling up* does not need the word *up*. Also, totaling something implies getting a sum, so *the sum of* is redundant. *Fewer* implies *in number*, so *in number* is also redundant (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print).

8. It goes without saying that the newly approved drug will produce an inhibitory effect on the AIDS-related symptoms.

ANSWER:

The newly approved drug will inhibit the AIDS-related symptoms.

Editor's Note: *It goes without saying that* is expendable. *Produce an inhibitory effect on* is wordy and should be changed to *inhibit* (§11.2.2, Expendable Words and Circumlocution, pp 406-407 in print).

9. My fellow colleagues and I have achieved a major breakthrough.

ANSWER:

My colleagues and I have achieved a breakthrough.

Editor's Note: *Fellow colleagues* is redundant; *fellow* should be deleted. All breakthroughs are major; therefore, *major* should be deleted (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print).



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10. The new health care law will have an impact on the ability of low-income patients to receive health care insurance.

ANSWER:

The new health care law will affect the ability of low-income patients to receive health care insurance.

Editor's Note: *Have an impact on* is wordy and should be changed to *affect* (§11.2.2, Expendable Words and Circumlocution, pp 406-407 in print).

11. During the time that I was applying to medical school, it was found that the number of openings for surgeons at major medical institutions was decreasing in number.

ANSWER:

While I was applying to medical school, the number of openings for surgeons at major medical institutions was decreasing.

Editor's Note: *During the time that* is wordy and should be changed to *while*. *It was found that* is expendable. Because *the number of openings* appears earlier in the sentence, it is redundant to say *decreasing in number* (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print; §11.2.2, Expendable Words and Circumlocution, pp 406-407 in print).

12. He obtained a completely comprehensive medical history for each individual patient.

ANSWER:

He obtained a comprehensive medical history for each patient.

Editor's Note: *Comprehensive* is an incomparable (absolute) word that should not be preceded by a superlative or comparative modifier (§11.2.3, Incomparable Words, p 407). *Each individual* is redundant (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print).



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13. In order to participate in the study, the patients had to be older than 35 years of age and residents of the United States.

ANSWER:

To participate in the study, the patients had to be older than 35 years and residents of the United States.

Editor's Note: *In order* is expendable (§11.2.2, Expendable Words and Circumlocution, pp 406-407 in print). In sentences with the phrases *older than* or *younger than*, the phrase *of age* is redundant and can be deleted (§11.2.1, Redundant Words, pp 405-406 in print).

14. Research in the field of genetics has increased since the completion of the fifth human genome map.

ANSWER:

Research in genetics has increased since the completion of the fifth human genome map.

Editor's Note: *In the field of* is expendable (§11.2.2, Expendable Words and Circumlocution, pp 406-407 in print).

15. The peer reviewers were completely unanimous in their decision to recommend publication of the manuscript.

ANSWER:

The peer reviewers were unanimous in their decision to recommend publication of the manuscript.

Editor's Note: *Unanimous* is an incomparable (absolute) word that should not be preceded by a superlative or comparative modifier (§11.2.3, Incomparable Words, p 407).



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