

HOW TO CONDENSE WRITING

Cut Down the Story



Objectives (Students will learn how to):

- Identify unnecessary language that does not contribute to reader understanding
- Use different strategies to eliminate excessive words and condense story length

Directions:

1. Prior to the time of instruction, print out as many copies of the attached story as needed. (One copy of the story per student if doing the activity individually. One copy per story, per # number of students if conducting the activity in small groups.)
2. Have all students read through the story to familiarize themselves with its content and general subject matter.
3. The story in its original form (excluding the headline and byline) is exactly 800 words. Using the strategies outlined in the [How to Condense Writing presentation](#), tell students they must cut at least 200 words. Any edits made should be documented with a writing utensil directly within the story itself.
4. Once the entire class is done, reconvene and discuss where students made the bulk of the edits. Was it from cutting down long quotes? Was it from eliminating background information?

Have students explain their reasoning for the edits they made, as well as how they would plan on maintaining reader comprehension with a shorter word count.

Headline: AP teachers speak out about College Board changes

By Grace Kaempfe, Parkway West High School

AP teachers are adjusting to the changes [College Board](#) made over the summer while also trying to maximize student exam and portfolio performances.

The College Board is a national organization that provides more than seven million students preparation for a transition to college through Advanced Placement courses offered in high school.

“Recently, there have been a lot of changes. It seems as if every year, [College Board] has a new moving target, and they make whatever adjustments are needed to reach it,” AP World History and AP European History teacher Jim Hermann said. “It’s a lot of work on teachers to go back and change all of our material that we have used to teach in previous years.”

With changes coming their way, AP teachers find it difficult to keep up with College Board. This year, AP Language and Composition teacher Leslie Lindsey adjusted to a new rubric for the timed essays that students write in class and on the AP exam.

“Last year, they used a completely different rubric system that I had to learn [during] my first year of teaching [the course]. It was a nine-point scale. This year, there is a completely different rubric system with a six-point system,” Lindsey said. “I basically had to relearn how to grade according to the new rubric, which slows me down greatly and erases all that I learned about grading these essays last year. It’s hard to teach a rubric structure that you are also learning at the same time.”

One concern about the College Board changes is how they affect non-AP courses. In many cases, AP classes have prerequisites, and these prerequisites are regular level classes that are not controlled by College Board. AP 2D Design and Photography was changed this year, with certain aspects of the course being removed and new ones being added. Because of this, students who had taken the prerequisites for the course felt unprepared for the AP class.

“I know College Board did not intentionally make [the course] more difficult for us; they just decided to change it. I think it would have been better if they let us know and had us start transitioning sooner, instead of just bringing on a new change, because it makes it difficult for everybody to get their projects done and make sure that they meet the new requirements,” AP 2D Design and Photography student and senior Sarah Lashly said. “There is now a lot of writing [in the course] instead of just projects. There is also a lot of brainstorming and reflections, which we never had in other photo and design classes. I’ve had no preparation for any of these aspects, and I know some people in my class who have also struggled with it.”

*Content from student publication at Parkway West High School



AP 2D Design and Photography teacher Katy Mangrich struggled to adjust to the new changes along with her students.

"I think [College Board is] still navigating what they want the course to look like. I keep telling my students that we all have to hold on because everybody's trying to navigate it. It is not just us—all high schools are trying to figure out what to do, and everybody's doing something a little different," Mangrich said. "A lot of people are holding onto old ways and just making minor adjustments whereas myself and [AP Studio Art teacher Kathrina] Briggs are completely throwing things out the window and revamping our whole process."

Teachers feel that if they were notified of the changes earlier, they would have enough time to make the proper adjustments to their personal curriculum and lessons. Teachers are typically notified at the end of the previous school year or during summer break, but in some instances, College Board announces changes in the middle of the school year, changing that year's AP exam.

"The new school year began, and I taught my first unit on rhetorical analysis with the new rubric I had received [over the summer]. At the very end of our unit, [College Board] changed the new rubric, and sent us an email with an updated version of it. That was in September. We already taught the first unit with the wrong rubric," Lindsey said.

Because multiple AP courses change every year, there is debate as to whether or not these changes are unfair to students. No matter how people side with that debate, most teachers can agree that the changes affect students in both positive and negative ways.

"I think it's impacting students because they're experimental kids. We're experimenting on you with this new curriculum, and then when [College Board] sees the flaws with the new curriculum, they change it," Lindsey said. "You have to [make changes in order to] expose the flaws. So this year's test, just like every other year's test, will be like an experiment."

*Content from student publication at Parkway West High School