Writing Skills: Avoid Wordiness

Source: Painless Writing by J. Stausser, 2001

- Preposition means "placed at the beginning"
- Prepositional phrases are groups of words that begin with prepositions and act as modifiers
- Common Prepositions

in	on	above	between	around
out	off	below	at	through
inside	up	over	to	behind
outside	with	under	from	by
beside	after	down	before	without
during	for	among	of	until

- Overuse of prepositional phrases can clutter your writing:

At this point in time, Mars is the target of the modern astronaut. By reason of its relative closeness to Earth, Mars is being studied by scientists for the purpose of a future mission. In a manner similar to the earlier study of the moon by scientists, a probe is planned to be sent by NASA to within the immediate vicinity of the planet with a view toward collecting data with respect to the atmosphere of the planet. NASA plans to spend in excess of one dozen of these probes during the course of the next five years. (From Painless Writing by J. Stausser, 2001).

- Eliminate unnecessary prepositions:
  - ♦ Identify compound prepositional phrases (CCPs)
    - ◊ with regard to
    - ◊ in connection with
    - ◊ for the purposes of
  - ♦ Convert CPPs to simple prepositions or eliminate them
    - ◊ In order to write more concisely, eliminate compound prepositional phrases.
    - ◊ To write more concisely, eliminate compound prepositional phrases.
  - ♦ Convert CPPs into participles (-ing words)
    - ◊ In the attempt to write concisely, Jim left out important details.
    - ◊ Attempting to write concisely, Jim left out important details.
  - ♦ Convert prepositional phrases to adverbs
    - ◊ The patient's symptoms were under close watch.
    - ◊ The patient's symptoms were watched closely.

- Convert prepositional phrases to adjectives
  - ◊ The response of the audience was silence.
  - ◊ The audience's response was silence.
- Write in the active voice
  - ◊ The exams were marked by the teacher.
  - ◊ The teacher marked the exam