**Pruning Your Prose: Strategies and Practice Sentences**

**Prune excess verbiage**

* Prune unnecessarily wordy phrases (Due to the fact that = because; in a timely fashion= quickly; keep in mind = remember; with all due respect = respectfully; in a swift and silent manner = swiftly and silently; the one at the end of the line = the last one)
* Prune to eliminate repetition (I asked him what his favorite part of his job is, and he told me that the best part of his job is that he is always learning things that are new to him = He said the best part of his job is that he is continually learning.)
* Prune unnecessary details (My dog, a female border collie-greyhound mix that I adopted from your shelter last month when your organization had that adoption fair at the Almaden shopping center in front of Pet Smart, seems old enough for spaying, so I was wondering what clinic you would recommend I take her to for that. = My dog is nine months old now. Where would you recommend that I take her to get spayed?)
* Prune unnecessary modifiers (*unexpected* surprise, *terrible* tragedy, *completely* flabbergasted)
* Prune the “there is/there are” construction (There are three things that must be kept in mind by all contestants = All contestants should remember three things = Remember three things.)

**Prune Judiciously**:

Don’t get carried away with this. Sometimes the wordier phrasing is rhetorically justifiable, whether to provide emphasis, to clarify, to avoid harshness, or to produce an effective cadence. Below are some examples.

* “These are the times that try men’s souls” sounds better than “These times try men’s souls.”
* “Four score and seven years ago, our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal” is stronger than “Eighty-seven years ago, our forefathers founded a free nation.”
* “To be or not to be, that is the question” is more powerful than “Is it better to be dead?”
* Wouldn’t you rather receive a letter that said, “We regret that we cannot accept your application at this time due to an unexpected abundance of excellent candidates for the position,” rather than one that said, “You didn’t get the job”?

**Sample, wordy and revised**

**Wordy version**: There is currently a lively, ongoing controversy among many sociologists and other professionals who study human nature : theories are being spun and arguments are being conducted among them about what it means that so many young people—and older people, for that matter—who live in our society today are so very interested in stories about zombies. (58 words)

**Revised**: A lively controversy currently rages among sociologists about why so many young people—and older people, for that matter—are so interested in stories about zombies. (26 words)

**Sentences to Prune**

1. In my humble opinion, it should be noted by those promoting San Jose State University that the students who go to SJSU are really very fortunate to be getting an education in such a great area where they have access to a lot of super dynamic companies that can serve as places to get internships and later first jobs in their chosen field of study, especially if their chosen field of study is related to technology in some way. It would not be wrong to say that this is not at all a minor perk. (96 words)
2. One thing among many other things that makes the current generation of young people—those approximately 10 to 25 years old—truly remarkable and to be admired is that so many of them are interested not just in getting jobs that make a lot of money but also in finding a sense of purpose and really making the world a better place, not only for themselves but for other people, whether living in our own country of living abroad, especially in what are still called “third world countries.” (89 words)
3. One example of this is the TOMS shoe company, which was created by an idealistic young man named Blake Mycoskie, who has been a huge success even though he has never aimed for personal success for himself alone but has also aimed to help the less fortunate, and he is also kind of amazing as a guy who became a big success in terms of money and fame even though he never completed a college degree. (77 words)