Writing Concisely — the Paramedic Method

Wordy writing may be a necessary step in discovering your ideas, but writers often revise their writing to eliminate excess in favor of vigorous and engaging text. To achieve it, ask yourself what is essential and allow every word to speak for itself.

The Paramedic Method, developed by Richard Lanham (*Revising Prose*), is an effective method for eliminating unnecessary words. It requires methodical attention at first, but once you start to recognize patterns, writing and editing for concision will come naturally. Here's how to do it:

Example sentence: The point I wish to make is that perception is the process of extracting information from stimulation emanating from the objects, places, and events in the world around us.

1. Eliminate slow wind-ups

~~The point I wish to make is that~~ perception is the process of extracting information from stimulation emanating from the objects, places, and events in the world around us.

2. Eliminate clichés (like "in a nutshell" or "better late than never")

Perception is the process of extracting information from stimulation emanating from ~~the~~ objects, places, and events ~~in the world around us~~.

3. Find all prepositions and "to be" verbs in all forms; **create a line break at each, making a list of phrases**

Perception
is the process
of extracting information
from stimulation emanating
from objects, places, and events.

4. Identify the possible "actions" and transform them into single verbs

Perception
is the *process*   **>> Process**
of *extracting information*   **>> Extract, Inform**
from *stimulation emanating*   **>> Stimulate, Emanate**
from objects, places, and events.

5. Identify the subject of the sentence and choose the clearest action verb for that subject to take on.

Subject: perception   Verb: extract

6. Bring the subject and verb together; eliminate other verbs and excess prepositional phrases

Perception ~~is the process of~~ **extract**~~sing~~ information ~~from stimulation emanating~~ from objects, places, and events.

Concise revision: Perception extracts information from objects, places, and events.