Wordiness Through Repetition

Saying anything more than once (unless for deliberate emphasis) is the most common way to create uneconomical writing.

Here are five easy rules to help you reduce repetition.

1. **State each fact only once.**

   **Bad example**  
   Buying used clothing is both cheap and economical.
   
   There is so little difference between cheap and economical that only one is necessary.

2. **Don’t state facts that can easily be assumed from a fact already given.**

   **Bad example**  
   The ball is round in shape.
   
   How else can it be round? Round is always a shape.

   **Other bad examples**  
   - Shopper’s purchase
   - emergency situation
   - investor’s investment
   - loud sound
   - young age
   - cold to touch
   - red in color
   - 12 metres long
   - salty in taste
   - crisis situation

   Also beware of self-repeaters (words that mean the same as the words they modify).
Learning Support at the Library

**Example**

integral part; true facts; return back; 
a real pleasure; for the purpose of; in actual fact;
repeat again; contributing factor; absolutely perfect;
at this point in time; deeply profound; end result;
solid fact, final conclusion, consensus of opinion,
mutual co-operation; equally as good; mutual agreement;
future generations to come; no other alternative; truly remarkable;
my personal opinion; completely surrounded; I, myself;
acute crisis

3. **Avoid trying to make a strong word even stronger with words like very, highly or extremely.**

**Strong Words**
- crucial
- tragic
- unique
- miserable
- wonderful
- violent
- obese
- fascinating
- beautiful
- impossible
- corrupt
- perfect

**Bad example**
Elsa’s handwriting is **very** unique.
Since unique means one of a kind, how can anything be very one of a kind!

4. **Your writing will be more efficient if you avoid repeating words within sentences, but also in sentences close by.**

**Bad examples**
Absences are **permitted** by instructor permission only.
The **imagery** of the poem contained many **images**.
5. Avoid using modifiers that contribute little or no meaning.

*Bad example*

I finished my homework in a relatively short time. somewhat large; rather urgent; quite comfortable; nice person; passably well done; really huge.

Repetition is not always wrong. It can be used deliberately to create emphasis.

*Example*

Karen was good-looking; Karen was slim. Karen was outgoing; Karen had many friends. Karen was athletic; Karen was talented. Karen was helpful; Karen was obedient. Karen was my older sister; she was the favorite!