

## Part 3. Manuscript Preparation

### 3.4 CONTROLLING LENGTH

Whether you are writing your first edition or revising your text, you should always be conscious of the potential length of your text.

#### **Tips on controlling length.**

Following are suggestions on how to control manuscript length:

- Don't feel you need to tell all you know
- Don't let reviewers bully you into including "everything but the kitchen sink"
- Avoid redundancy: don't describe in prose the identical information that is displayed in a figure or table (choose one way or the other)
- Don't be consistent for consistency's sake, but remember that predictability contributes to increased reader comprehension
- Keep chapter length fairly consistent and reasonable for assigned reading
- Strongly consider combining references at the end of the book to avoid duplication
- List key terms (and definitions) either within the chapter or in the Glossary but not in both places
- Do not use four examples when one or two will do
- Separate "need to know" content from "nice to know" content as a way to focus use of space in your book

#### **Controlling length in revised editions.**

Following are additional suggestions for controlling manuscript length in revisions:

- Take time to reread or outline your chapter after you have embedded new information. You may find that you have lost the logical presentation of concepts. You can fix that by moving sections or topics that seem out of place and look for a more logical location to insert them.
- If you take time to outline your revised chapters, you may find that you discuss a concept in more than one place in the text and you have just forgotten that from your previous edition.
- Weigh your decisions carefully. Evaluate whether students will find that information essential to their understanding of a concept. If not, delete it.

- Review your pedagogical elements. Is there one kind of element or certain figures/tables/photos that have outlived their usefulness? Can you combine information in some figures or tables to make a more meaningful feature?
- Is there an appendix or two that you should delete? Can this information be placed online or on a CD? Can you refer the student to a website with the same information?
- Chapters should be about the same length. If one or more is much longer than others, examine it to see if it is about a topic for which you are very knowledgeable and have thus told students more than they need to know.
- A good rule of thumb—If you add something to the text, delete something of equal length.

**Cast-off formula.**

Use the following “cast-off” formula to compare your manuscript pages to your current text pages or to compare pages from a text that is compatible to the size your text will be. Your Acquisitions Editor can tell you what the trim size of your text will be.

Step 1 Find a manuscript page that is all text; no excerpts or figures.

Step 2 Count the number of words in each line of text for 10 lines.

*For example:*

Line 1	12	Line 6	13
Line 2	13	Line 7	15
Line 3	12	Line 8	13
Line 4	14	Line 9	14
Line 5	16	Line 10	12

Step 3 Find the average number of words per manuscript line.

*For example:*

The average number of words for the line noted above is 13.4.

Step 4 Count the average number of lines per manuscript page.

*For example:* Using 12 pt. Courier and 1-inch margins on top, bottom, left, and right, each manuscript page will have 26 lines.

- Step 5 Multiply these two numbers. The result is the average number of words per manuscript page.
- For example:  $13.4 \times 26 \text{ lines} = 348.4$  or 348 words per page
- Step 6 Follow the same procedure for one page of your current edition text or a text that will be the same trim size as your text.
- For example:*  $14.6 \text{ words per line} \times 48 \text{ lines} = 702.9$  or 703 words per page
- Step 7 Determine the ratio of manuscript pages per text pages.
- For example:  $348/703$  equals about 2 pages of manuscript per text page.
- Step 8 Note that if text authors use different fonts or different margins than described here, the formula will need to be done for both or all authors.
- Step 9 Estimate how many pages, figures and tables will take up separately. Use current or compatible text as examples.
- Step 10 Add in the current number of front and end matter pages.