

EMBELLISHING VS. SUPPORTING

A student who embellishes their work provides non-essential information that “lacks substance and...depth of meaning” (Hoang, 2018, p. 1). Hoang (2018) wrote, “Embellishing occurs most often when not enough research has been done or writers are scrounging for a word count” (p. 1). *

Though many students may think that embellishing entails digressing from their main claim, embellishing often means they are simply “rewriting their main claim” (Hoang, 2018, p. 2).

DIFFERENT FORMS OF EMBELLISHMENT

1. **Embellishing can take place in whole sentences.** A writer will make their claim then follow it up with statements that, instead of providing support for their claim and evidence of research, essentially rewrite what they already stated. This is called *embellishing*.

EMBELLISHING A CLAIM

Assignment Prompt: Research and discuss how America has become dependent on technology in 200-250 words.

Example with embellished statements **highlighted**:

America has become dependent on technology due to the convenience and opportunities it offers. Cell phones allow an easy way of corresponding through text messaging; emails get notes from one person to another in a matter of moments. Many students from middle school through college are reliant on technology for their education. **Without technology, America would be lost. They would not be able to text, email, or enjoy many of the modern conveniences they do now. They would have to find new ways to function that do not involve technology, which would be a trial.**

NOTE: Because we are using a shorter assignment for this example, the writer’s first sentence is his thesis statement. Notice also that while the writer starts his paragraph off strong, he errs by beginning to restate his original claim.

2. **Embellishing can also occur in words or phrases.** *Adjectives* (i.e., words used to describe nouns) especially can be used to embellish because they can, in a way, *rewrite* the noun.

Example: A survey was done on **teenage** highschoolers.

NOTE: This adjective is a form of embellishment because it is already generally assumed that most highschoolers are teenagers.

WAYS TO AVOID EMBELLISHMENT AND SUPPORT YOUR CLAIM

You can employ several methods to *support* rather than *embellish* your claim and also maintain [concision](#) in your writing, including:

- **Thoroughly research your topic.**
 - Doing extensive research ensures that you have a substantial amount of diverse information to write about and leaves you with little time or room for restating.
- **Develop well-structured [academic paragraphs](#)** by building off your research with helpful, constructive commentary that:
 - Is written in 3rd person
 - Analyzes your research
 - Ties your research back to your main claim in a succinct, thoughtful way
- **Do not stress over the word count.**
 - The less you focus on the word count, the less likely you are to embellish.
- **Cut back on adjectives as much as you can.**
 - If an adjective is not absolutely essential to your text or it does not add depth to your overall meaning, then consider eliminating it.

SUPPORTING A CLAIM

Here is the revised version of the paragraph above that takes these methods into account. The student revised his paragraph by obliterating all forms of embellishment and instead incorporated more research and supportive commentary.

America has become dependent on technology due to the convenience and opportunities it offers. Text messaging and emailing allow an easier, faster way to correspond with friends and relatives. Entertainment can also be found through technology with apps like TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram (Brooke 26). Lastly, according to Fitzgerald and Housler, there is a steady rise of technology being used in schools (76). Between calculators, computers, and cell phones, the need for pen and paper is going down significantly. Many kids prefer doing their homework using technology, as, according to Smith, this cuts back on their study time by at least half (86). With all of these new developments, it is little wonder that America, from the younger to the older generation, has become dependent on technology.

Also, the student from our second example could revise her statement by deleting the extra adjective Or by replacing it with another adjective that would provide more essential, little-known information to her text, such as:

- A survey was done on **highschoolers**.
- A survey was done on **homeschool** highschoolers.
- A survey was done on **public school** highschoolers.
- A survey was done on **red-haired** highschoolers.

**The information in this resource is adapted from the Homegrown Handout “AP Style Frontloading for Concise Writing: Embellishing vs. Supporting” by My-Tam Hoang of San Jose State University.*

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