Eliminating Unnecessary Wordiness

As you read the following list, consider which patterns are typical of your writing:

1. Omit the filler phrases “it is,” “there is,” and “there are” at the beginning of sentences; these often delay the sentence’s true subject and verb.
   - **Wordy:** It is expensive to upgrade computer systems.
   - **Concise:** Upgrading computer systems is expensive.

2. Omit “this” from the beginning of a sentence by joining it to the preceding sentence with a comma.
   - **Wordy:** Chloroflurocarbons have been banned from aerosols. This has lessened the ozone layer’s depletion.
   - **Concise:** Chloroflurocarbons have been banned from aerosols, lessening the ozone layer’s depletion.

3. Change “which” or “that” constructions to an “ing” word.
   - **Wordy:** The committee, which meets monthly, oversees accounting procedures and audits.
   - **Concise:** The committee, meeting monthly oversees accounting procedures and audits.

4. Omit “which” or “that” altogether when possible.
   - **Wordy:** Because the fluid, which was brown and poisonous, was dumped into the river, the company that was negligent had to shut down.
   - **Concise:** Because the brown, poisonous fluid was dumped into the river, the negligent company had to shut down.

5. Replace passive verbs with active verbs. In passive constructions, the subject of the sentence is being acted upon; in active constructions, the subject is the actor.
   - **Wordy:** Rain forests are being destroyed by uncontrolled logging.
   - **Concise:** Uncontrolled logging is destroying rain forests.

6. Change “its” or “was” when they occur alone to a strong verb.
   - **Wordy:** A new fire curtain is necessary for the stage.
   - **Concise:** The stage needs a new fire curtain.