

Writing Clear Sentences: Write in Verbal Style

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Sentences in verbal style are more effective because they have strong verbs and are easier to read than sentences written in noun style. You can use some easy strategies for identifying sentences that you should revise from noun style to verbal style—sentences with stronger verbs.

1. Read your essay and look for words with noun endings like *-ion*, *-ance/ence*, or *-ment*. Underline the noun endings. You can often revise the sentence by changing this noun to a verb: *discussion* becomes *discuss*, *acceptance* becomes *accept*, *establishment* becomes *establish*.

Example:

Noun Style: Their discussion was about a tax cut.

Verbal Style: They discussed a tax cut.

2. Look for a form of the verb **be** (*is, are, was, were*) as the sentence verb. Also look for weak, overused verbs, such as *make, do, have*, etc. Underline these verbs. Often you can substitute the verb form of a describing word (an adjective) or of a word with a noun ending in the sentence for the original verb.

Example:

Noun Style: The medicine will have a soothing effect on the patient.

Verbal Style: The medicine will soothe the patient.

3. Also check your sentences to see if you have more than one preposition (words like *at, of, in, on, about*) and circle any you see. If the sentence has multiple prepositions, the sentence is probably in noun style rather than verbal style.

Example:

Noun Style: There was precision in their preparation of the data.

Verbal Style: They prepared the data precisely.

When you use one of these strategies to change your sentence to verbal style, the revised sentence is often shorter—it becomes a concise, clearer, more effective sentence.

Exercise A

Revise these sentences so that they are shorter and have stronger verbs. Look for noun endings and weak main verbs (e.g., *make, do, have*) or main verbs that are forms of *be*.

1. The police conducted an investigation into the matter.
2. She made a translation of the message.
3. The candidate's appearance before the board was on October 15.
4. During the school year, I made the decision to earn top grades.
5. The performance of the drill by the troops was perfect.
6. The general carried out the coordination of the surprise attack.
7. The chairperson was supportive of the committee's attempt to come to an agreement.
8. The organization has the requirement that all members wear uniforms.

9. The news has made the captain very angry.

10. There were expectations by the governing committee that their report would meet the deadline.

Exercise B

Revise a paragraph from one of your essays so that it is written in verbal style. If you do not have a paper to revise, find a paragraph in a textbook and revise it. Math books often have noun style sentences.