

Avoiding Nominalizations

VOCABULARY

Nominalization

A verb or an adjective (ending in -ing, -tion, or -ness) disguised as a noun. The word “nominalization” is itself a nominalization! It is created from a combination of the verb “nominalize” and the suffix “-tion.”

THE RULE

1. Avoid using nominalizations by using active verbs.
 2. If a nominalization is the cause for a wordy phrase, see if you can eliminate it with one word.
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PRACTICE *Let's practice using Rule #1.*

Error: The **decision** to construct a health science building was made by the university trustees. *(Note how the nominalization leads to a passive voice verb and wordiness.)*

Correction: The university trustees **decided** to construct a health science building. *(Converting the nominalization to a verb makes the sentence more concise.)*

Error: Mike's **hope** was for **preservation** of his relationship with Molly, but Tony's meddling make the break-up an **inevitability**. *(Note how the nominalizations here lead to the weak “to be” verb “was” as well as to wordiness.)*

Correction: Mike **hoped** to **preserve** his relationship with Molly, but Tony's meddling made the break-up **inevitable**. *(More concise!)*

PRACTICE *Let's practice using Rule #2.*

Error: The procedural change **resulted in an increase** in enrollment and retention rates. *(Note the wordiness of this sentence.)*

Correction: The procedural change **increased** enrollment and retention rates. *(Better!)*