



Put the action in the verb

At the heart of every good sentence is a strong, precise verb; the converse is true as well—at the core of most confusing, awkward, or wordy sentences lies a weak verb. Try to put the action of your sentence in the verb rather than burying the action in a noun or blurring it across the entire sentence.

Good: *The committee has to approach it differently.*

Bad: *The establishment of a different approach on the part of the committee has become a necessity.*

(Williams, 1985, p. 11)

Beware of nominalizations

Watch out especially for nominalizations (verbs that have been made into nouns by the addition of -tion).

Nominalization: *An evaluation of the procedures needs to be done.*

How to fix it: *We need to evaluate the procedures.*

Nominalization: *The procedures need to be evaluated.*

How to fix it: *We need to evaluate the procedures.*

Nominalization: *The stability and quality of our financial performance will be developed through the profitable execution of our existing business, as well as the acquisition or development of new businesses.*

How to fix it: *We will improve our financial performance not only by executing our existing business more profitably but by acquiring or developing new businesses.*