



Avoid using vague nouns

Try to avoid using the following vague, all-purpose nouns, which sometimes lead to wordiness, especially when used in prepositional phrases.

- factor
- aspect
- area
- situation
- consideration
- degree
- case

Examples

Vague: Consumer demand is rising in the area of services.

Precise: Consumers are demanding more services.

Vague: Strong reading skills are an important factor in students' success in college.

Precise: Students' success in college depends on their reading skills.

Vague: Photography took on new aspects during the Civil War.

Precise: The Civil War saw the advent of graphic battlefield photography.

Avoid unnecessarily inflated words

While a large vocabulary is useful, you should try to avoid using inflated diction if a simpler phrase works equally well.

Examples

Inflated: cognizant of
Simple: aware of, knows

Inflated: facilitate
Simple: help

Inflated: impact on
Simple: affect

Inflated: implement
Simple: start, create, carry out, begin

Inflated: subsequent to
Simple: after

Inflated: utilize
Simple: use

Avoid noun strings

Unless readers are familiar with your terminology (or jargon), avoid using phrases with many consecutive nouns (noun strings).

Examples

Noun string: MHS has a hospital employee relations improvement program.
Correction: MHS has a program to improve relations among employees.

Noun string: NASA continues to work on the International Space Station astronaut living-quarters module development project.
Correction: NASA is still developing the module that will provide living quarters for the astronauts aboard the International Space Station.