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.