

NOMINALIZATIONS

Nominalizations occur when writers transform verbs into nouns, obscuring the main actions of their sentences.

Nominalizations appear in subjects, after verbs, and between prepositions.

These principles come from Chapter 3 of *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup.

IDENTIFYING AND CORRECTING NOMINALIZATIONS

1. **Scan your writing for nominalizations** – Look for nouns with endings like “tion,” “ment,” “ence,” and “ing.”
2. **Cut nominalizations down to their original verbs** – Remove the endings of the nominalizations, leaving only the root verb behind.
3. **Determine your main action** – Compare these verbs to your current verbs. Ask yourself, “Am I hiding my main actions inside these nominalizations?”
4. **Make that verb a main action** – Place the root verb after your subject.

EXAMPLES

Sentence with Nominalizations: Good leaders generate solutions to problems, and perseverance is necessary in conflict.

- **Scan your writing for nominalizations:** The noun “solution” ends in “tion,” and the noun “perseverance” ends in “ance.”
- **Cut nominalizations down to their original verbs:** Remove “tion,” and “solution” becomes “solve.” Remove the “ance,” and “perseverance” becomes “persevere.”
- **Determine your main action:** Compare “solve” to “generate” and “persevere” to “is.” Which verbs describe the main actions of the sentence?
- **Make those verbs the main actions:** Place the root verbs “solve” and “persevere” after the subject “leaders.”

Sentence without Nominalizations: Good leaders solve problems and persevere through conflict.

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