![Emphasis logo](www.writing-skills.com)

Changing nominalisations to verbs

Nominalisations are nouns that hide verbs. For example, the noun 'discussion' hides the verb '(to) discuss'. You can recognise a noun by the fact you can put 'the', 'a' or 'an' in front of it ('a discussion', for instance).

When you start looking out for these, you'll realise how much baggage they bring with them. They need extra words to make them work within a sentence, and they also tend to attract passive verbs and even other nominalisations. So once you get into the habit of changing these nouns to verbs, you'll start to see many other ways you can lighten up your writing.

You'll also make your writing clearer. Nominalisations – like 'consideration' and 'implementation' – are abstract nouns. And if your writing is full of these, then your reader has to hold lots of concepts in their mind to take in your meaning. But when you use verbs instead, then people (or organisations) are **doing** things in your writing. This is much easier for your reader to picture and to follow.

Have a look at these examples of how you can change sentences that contain common nominalisations.

Utilisation

With nominalisation (in italics):
David Barry is overseeing our initiative for the *utilisation* of iPads to train new hires remotely.

With verb instead (in italics):
David Barry is overseeing our initiative to *use* iPads to train new hires remotely.

In this case, you might consider if you could cut 'to use iPads' altogether.

Implementation

With nominalisation (in italics):
This proposal outlines the costs of the *implementation* of the pilot project.

With verb instead (in italics):
This proposal outlines the costs of *implementing* the pilot project.

Once you've replaced the noun, you might even decide there's a better word than the nearest verb. In this example, could you replace 'implementing' with 'running' or 'setting up'?

Creation

With nominalisation (in italics):
The attached guidelines will help you in the *creation* of a risk assessment for your shop.

With verb instead (in italics):
The attached guidelines will help you *create* a risk assessment for your shop.

When you're changing a nominalisation to a verb, look for **who** is **performing** the verb (who is doing the action). As you can see, in the example above it's 'you'.

Intention

With nominalisations (in italics):
The *intention* of the researchers was to study the *performance* of people working in high-pressure jobs.

With verbs instead (in italics):
The researchers *intended* to study how people *perform* in high-pressure jobs.

Yes, there's an extra nominalisation this time ('performance'). It's easy for them to pile up when you're in the habit of writing in this style.

You don't have to change every single nominalisation in your writing. Remember: look out for those that are hiding **key actions**. In this example, both nouns are easy to change to verbs.

Consideration

With nominalisations (in italics):
Your *failure* to comply with these terms will lead to the *consideration* of legal action being taken against you.

With verbs instead (in italics):
If you *fail* to comply with these terms, we will *consider* taking legal action against you.

There are two nouns hiding verbs in this example too. It also shows another danger of using nominalisations: they attract the passive voice. In the passive voice, the doer appears in the sentence **after** what they're doing, or might even be absent altogether – which can leave your reader with questions.

When you look for the people who are performing the actions (here, 'fail' and 'consider'), you'll see this information is missing from 'consider' in the first version. **Who** will consider taking legal action? The reason for this is 'being taken against you' is the passive voice.

In the second version, the doer is named ('we') and put before the verb ('consider [taking]'). This is the active voice. The active voice is clearer, shorter and more direct.

If this all sounds a bit complicated, don't worry: we'll cover the active and passive voices more in other lessons.

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