

NOMINALIZATIONS

When we turn a verb or adjective into a noun, we create a nominalization.

EXAMPLES

- A **need** exists for more efficient candidate **selection**. => We **must select** candidates more efficiently.
- There *is* the **possibility** of prior approval. => He **may approve** of it ahead of time.
- The **establishment** of a different **approach** on the part of the committee *has become* a **necessity**. => The committee **must approach** it differently.
- Our **request** is that on your **return**, you *conduct* a **review** of the data and provide an immediate **report**. => We **request** that when you **return**, you **review** the date and **report** immediately.

COMMON NOMINALIZATIONS

Verb	Noun	Adjective	Noun
discover	discovery	careless	carelessness
move	movement	difficult	difficulty
resist	resistance	different	difference
react	reaction	elegant	elegance
fail	failure	applicable	applicability
refuse	refusal	intense	intensity

USEFUL NOMINALIZATIONS

1. The nominalization may be a subject that refers to a previous sentence.
2. The nominalization names what would be the object of its verb.

I do not understand either *her meaning or his intention*.
 I do not understand either *what she means or what he intends*.

3. A succinct nominalization can replace *the fact that*.

The fact that I denied what he accused me of impressed the jury.
My denial of his accusations impressed the jury.
When I denied his accusations, I impressed the jury.

4. Some nominalizations refer to often repeated concepts. Some nominalizations name ideas we can express only in nominalizations.

abortion, taxation, amendment, election, revolution, freedom, death, love, hope, life

SPOTTING AND REVISING NOMINALIZATIONS

1. When the nominalization follows an empty verb, change the nominalization to a verb that can replace the empty verb.

The police **conducted** an *investigation* of the matter.
 The police *investigated* the matter.

2. When a nominalization follows a *there is* or *there are*, change the nominalization into a verb and find the subject.

There was considerable *erosion* of the land from the floods.
 The floods considerably *eroded* the land.

3. When the nominalization is the subject of an empty verb, change the nominalization to a verb and find a new subject.

Our *intention is* to audit the records of the program.
 We *intend* to audit the records of the program.

4. When you find two nominalizations in a row, make at least the first into a verb. Then either leave the second as it is or turn it into a verb in a clause beginning with *how* or *why*.

There was first a **review** of the **evolution** of the dorsal fin.
 First, she **reviewed** the **evolution** of the dorsal fin.
 First, she **reviewed** *how* the dorsal fin **evolved**.

5. We have to revise most extensively when a nominalization in a subject is linked to another nominalization in the predicate.

Subject: Their **cessation** of hostilities
Logical Connection: was because of
Object: personnel **losses**.

Follow these steps to revise such sentences:

1. Change abstractions to verbs: cessation ->, cease, loss -> lose
2. Find new subjects for those verbs: they ceased, they lost
3. Link the new clauses with a word that expresses their logical connection.

To express cause:		because, when
To express condition:		if, provided that
To express reservation:		though, although
Their cessation of hostilities	->	They ceased hostilities
was because of	->	because
their personnel losses .	->	they lost personnel.

This material has been adapted from Joseph Williams' *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*.
 Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.