
… Verbs strike, soothe, grin, cry, exasperate, decline, fly, hurt, and heal. …

… Verbs make writing go, and they matter more to our language than any other part of speech.”

Donald Hall

Prefer the verb.

Unearth buried verbs.

Nominalizations:

- Unearth buried verbs.
- Replace to be with action verbs.

Nominalizations are noun forms of action verbs.

Prefer the verb.

Nominalizations:

- Deaden dynamic language
- Lumber (require crutches, such as of phrases)
- Throw off readers’ expectations (that the subject will define the actor, not the action)
- Result in weak, supportive verbs, rather than dynamic, powerful ones

Unearth buried verbs.

Beware words that end in the following:

- -ion
- -ence
- -ment
- -al
- -ancy
- -ity
- -ant
- -ency
- -ent
- -ance
- -ness
- -ure

Unearth buried verbs.

Beware other dead giveaways:

- To make
- To have
- Of
Unearth buried verbs.

**Rather than:**
- have knowledge of
- held a meeting
- made the decision
- make provision for
- reach an agreement
- make an appearance
- take under consideration

**Prefer:**
- know
- met
- decided
- provide
- agree
- appear
- consider

Unearth buried verbs.

**Change this:**
- We carried out an analysis of the portfolio.
- The acts were violative of our contract.

**To this:**
- We analyzed the portfolio.
- The acts violated our contract.

Unearth buried verbs.

**Change this:**
- The amendment of any part of this contract may not be a valid modification unless supportable by express written documentation bearing the signatures of both parties.

**To this:**
- The parties may amend any part of this contract only if they both sign a written document that expressly modifies the contract.

Unearth buried verbs.

**Change this:**
- Customer shall procure all items necessary for the implementation of this Agreement …
- Upon termination of this Agreement, …

**To this:**
- Customer will procure all items necessary to implement this Agreement …
- Once this Agreement terminates, …

Unearth buried verbs.

**Replace to be with action verbs.**

**Rather than:**
- am able to
- were aware of
- is binding on
- was suitable
- is indicative of
- am in error
- be benefited by
- was applicable to

**Prefer:**
- can
- knew
- binds
- suited
- indicates
- err
- benefit
- applied
"Good writers avoid …

… strings of sentences with only such verbs as is and has to prop them up."

Tom Goldstein & Jethro K. Lieberman

Replace to be with action verbs.

Rather than:
- We are in agreement.
- I am in receipt of your letter.
- She is entitled to leave as early as she wishes.
- This latest fiasco is indicative of your poor attitude.

Prefer:
- We agree.
- I have received your letter.
- She may leave as early as she wishes.
- This latest fiasco indicates your poor attitude.

Prefer the verb.

- "The stronger the verb the better the sentence.
  Charles W. Ferguson

- "Be-verbs lack muscle."
  Bryan A. Garner