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Revising Sentences for Conciseness



Revising Sentences for Conciseness

At the end of this module, you will be able to identify and correct stylistic problems involving the following:

- Nominal Style
- Talkie Verbs
- Wordy Phrases



Patterns for Verbal Style

Verb Form	Noun Form
require	require <u>ment</u> of
impose	imposi <u>tion</u> of
discuss	discussi <u>on</u> of
resemble	resemb <u>lance</u> to
remove	remov <u>a</u> l of
fear	fear of

OF



Example of Noun-Based Style

Everything today has **the requirement of the conformity of** people to some standard. There is **the requirement** to be similar in their **speech** and in their **beliefs**. If you have **different** ideas, people have **the thought** you are odd. Our **fear** stops **the expression of** our **thoughts** about our surroundings. We must have **a resemblance to** our neighbors or friends. Because there is so little we can do to be individuals, it is my **thought** that we would commit **an error by the imposition of** a dress standard on students. It would be **a loss to** their **expression of** individuality.

- **100 words; 7 sentences; 14.2 words/sentence;**
- **Passive = 0%; Grade Level = 7.5; “of” = 5**



Example of Verb-Based Style

Everything today **requires** people **conform** to some standard. Similarity is **required** in how they **speak** and what they **believe**. If your ideas **differ**, people **think** you are odd. We **fear expressing** what we **think** about our surroundings. We must **resemble** our neighbors or friends. Because there is so little we can do to be individuals, I **think** we would **err** by **imposing** a dress standard on students. They would **lose** a way to **express** individuality.

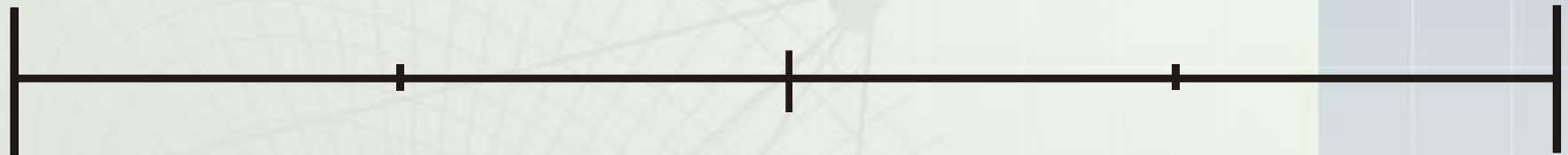
- **75 words; 7 sentences; 10.7 words/sentence;**
- **Passive = 0%; Grade Level = 6.6; “of” = 0**



Nominal/Verbal Continuum

Noun-Based Style

Verb-Based Style



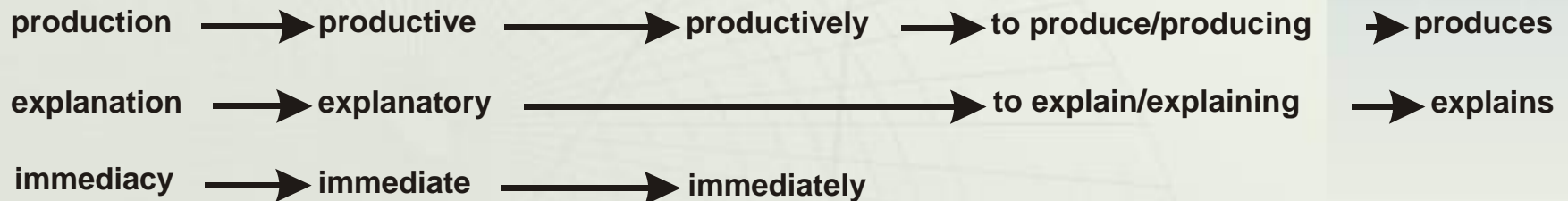
Nouns

Adjectives

Adverbs

Verbals

Verbs





Verbal Style

Our request is that on your return, you conduct a review of the data and provide an immediate report. (19 words)



Verbal Style

Our request is that on your return, you conduct a review of the data and provide an immediate report. (19 words)



Verbal Style

We request that when you return, you review the data and report immediately. (13 words)



Verbal Style

The removal of reduced sulfur compounds from in-mill processes and the prevention of anaerobic formation of reduced sulfur compounds will improve both air and effluent quality. (26 words)



Verbal Style

The removal of reduced sulfur compounds from in-mill processes and the prevention of anaerobic formation of reduced sulfur compounds will improve both air and effluent quality. (26 words)



Verbal Style

Removing reduced sulfur compounds from in-mill processes and preventing anaerobic formation of reduced sulphur compounds will improve both air and effluent quality. (22 words)



Verbal Style

Hence, there is a distinct diurnal and seasonal variation in the air mass stability and dispersion characteristics.

(17 words)



Verbal Style

Hence, **there is** a distinct **diurnal and seasonal variation in** the air mass stability and dispersion characteristics.

(17 words)



Verbal Style

Hence, the air mass stability and dispersion characteristics vary daily and seasonally. (12 words)



Verbal Style

Many engineering personnel have made comments regarding a lack of knowledge about what new information is available in the library as literature is filed into the library without any sort of notification. (32 words).



Verbal Style

Many **engineering personnel** have **made comments regarding a lack of** knowledge about what new information is available in the library as literature is filed into the library without **any sort of** notification. (32 words).



Verbal Style

Many engineers have commented about not being notified when new literature is filed in the library. (16 words).

OR

The engineers want to know what's in the library. (9 words).



Some Pointers

- Look for the articles and prepositions that accompany nouns (especially *of*).
- Transform nouns to verbs wherever possible.
- Avoid combining a noun-based style, heavy use of prepositions, and the passive voice. **This combination is extremely difficult for readers!**



Descriptive Verbs

Yesterday, Josey **made** three hundred dollars.

counterfeited?

earned?

printed?

manufactured?

The OED uses 13 pages to define the verb “make”!



Descriptive Verbs

The thief **is** in the house.

=

The thief **exists** in the house.

The thief **prowl**s in the house?

The thief **cower**s in the house?

The thief **snooze**s in the house?

The thief **ransack**s the house?



Patterns for Verbs

List of talkie verbs

(Be)	Drive	Go	Look	Seem
Bring	Face	Grow	Make	Show
Carry	Feel	Have	Place	Take
Come	Find	Hold	Put	Think
Deal	Get	Keep	Say	Try
Do	Give	Know	See	Turn



Descriptive Verbs

Her report makes a recommendation that we do a study of the problem. (13 words)



Descriptive Verbs

Her report **makes a recommendation that** we do a study of the problem. (13 words)



Descriptive Verbs

Her report recommends we study the problem.

(7 words)



Descriptive Verbs

The committee had made the following series of recommendations. (9 words)



Descriptive Verbs

The committee **had made** the following series of recommendations. (9 words)



Descriptive Verbs

The committee recommended the following: (5 words)



Descriptive Verbs

The term “domain expertise” is used to describe some of the responses we can make. (15 words)



Descriptive Verbs

The term “domain expertise” **is used** to describe some of the responses we **can make**. (15 words)



Descriptive Verbs

The term “domain expertise” describes some of our potential responses. (10 words)



Descriptive Verbs

Because of the team's ignorance, no one could know at the beginning what the product was going to look like or how long it was going to take them to make it. (32 words)



Descriptive Verbs

Because of the team's ignorance, no one could **know** at the beginning what the product was **going** to **look** like or how long it was **going** to **take** them to **make** it. (32 words)



Descriptive Verbs

Because of the team's ignorance, no one could predict the product's design or the time required to create it.

(19 words)



Descriptive Verbs

If they believe they would spend their own money this way, they go ahead and make the purchase because they know they are doing the right thing. This gives people ownership as well as the responsibility to make the decisions that directly impact their project. As the company grows at such a rapid rate, there may not be enough structure or direction for the new employees to make these decision. They also may not know who to go to for the directions to help them.

(80 words)



Descriptive Verbs

If they **believe** they would spend their own money this way, they **go** ahead and **make** the purchase because they **know** they **are doing** the right thing. This **gives** people ownership as well as the responsibility to **make** the decisions that directly impact their project. As the company **grows** at such a rapid rate, there may not **be** enough structure or direction for the new employees to **make** these decision. They also may not **know** who to **go** to for the directions to help them.

(80 words)



Descriptive Verbs

If certain they would spend their own money this way, they purchase the equipment because they are confident of management support. This approach enables ownership as well as responsibility for decisions directly impacting their project. While the company expands rapidly, the lack of structure or direction may prevent these decisions by new employees. They also may be uncertain of whom to ask for advice. (58 words)



Some Pointers

- Learn to recognize the verbs you most commonly use in speech and edit for them.
- Look for the “real” verb hidden in a nominalization following the talkie verb.
- Use a good thesaurus to suggest alternatives.
- If you use a dictation program, you **must** learn to edit for this pattern!



Patterns for Wordy Phrases

Wordy Expressions	Concise Substitutions
are indicative of	indicate
at a rapid rate	rapidly
at that point in time	then
at the present time	now, today
aware of the fact that	know
bring the matter to a conclusion	conclude
do not find any difference	find no difference
due to the fact that	given that, because
form a consensus of opinion	agree
has the ability to	can
have to	must
in a great number of cases	often



Patterns for Wordy Phrases

Wordy Expressions	Concise Substitutions
in close proximity	near
in regard to	about
in spite of the fact that	even though
in the event that	if
in this day and age	today
informs as to the fact that there is	tells of
is able to	can
is unable to	cannot
it is anticipated that	we anticipate
it is believed/considered by many	many believe/consider/etc.
it is clear that	clearly
it is evident that	obviously



Patterns for Wordy Phrases

Wordy Expressions

it is necessary that someone . . .

it should be assumed that

it will be noted that

make a decision

on a personal basis

seem to be

take the place of

the majority of

the preponderance of

the reason why is that

there is also the likelihood that

until such time as

Concise Substitutions

someone must . . .

assume that

note that

decide

personally

seem

substitute

most

most

because

likely

until



Wordy Phrases

This meteorological data file was chosen due to the fact that the mill is also located on the north side of the valley.

(23 words)



Wordy Phrases

This meteorological data file was chosen **due to the fact that** the mill is also located on the north side of the valley.

(23 words)



Wordy Phrases

This meteorological data file was chosen because the mill is also located on the north side of the valley. (19 words)



Wordy Phrases

This report is an attempt to identify those areas that could be improved and make recommendations on how they might change for the better. (24 words)



Wordy Phrases

This report **is an attempt to identify** those areas that could be improved and **make recommendations on how they might change for the better.** (24 words)



Wordy Phrases

This report identifies areas to improve and recommends changes. (9 words)



Wordy Phrases

It is necessary that someone make a decision on a personal basis due to the fact that the preponderance of us cannot form a consensus of opinion about how to bring the matter to a conclusion. (36 words)



Wordy Phrases

It is necessary that someone make a decision on a personal basis due to the fact that the preponderance of us cannot form a consensus of opinion about how to bring the matter to a conclusion. (36 words)



Wordy Phrases

Someone must decide because we cannot agree how to resolve the debate. (12 words)

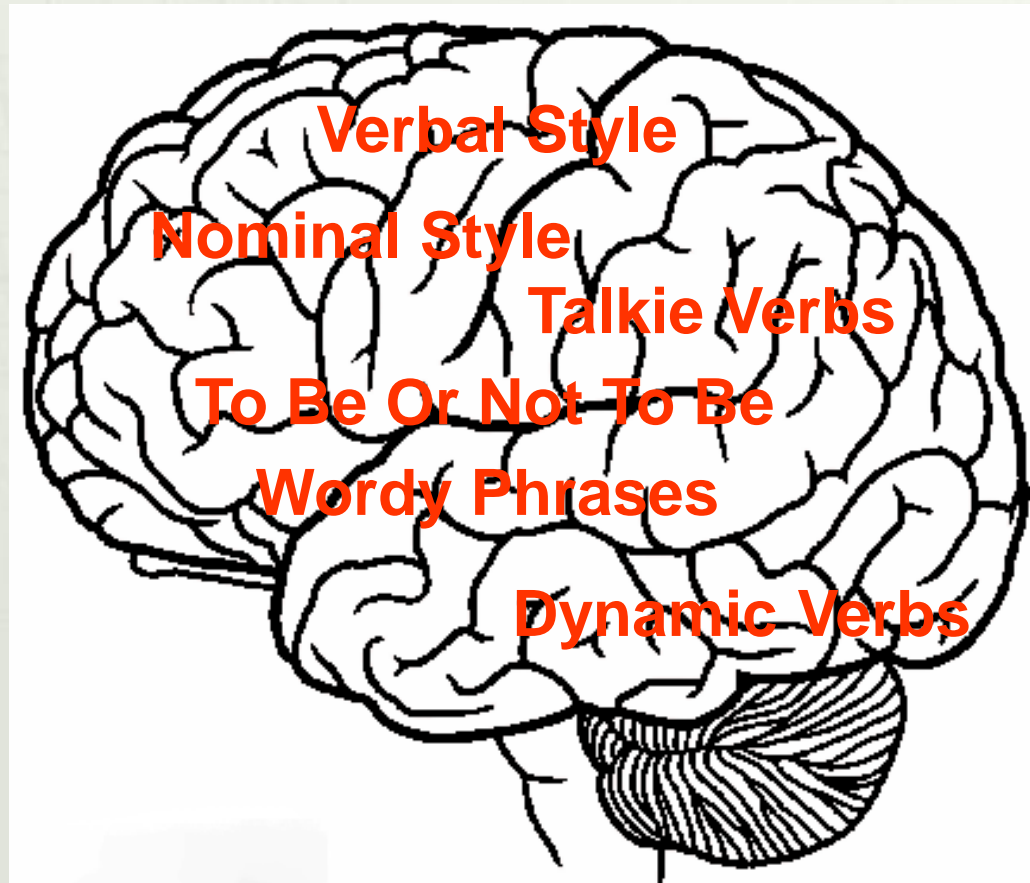


Some Pointers

- We all use wordy phrases that we pick up in conversation or from TV.
- Learn to recognize your favorite wordy phrases and edit for them.
- Ask a friend or colleague to look for them in your writing if you have difficulty recognizing them.



This Is Your Brain on Style





Blind Reviews

- To determine if the papers submitted are of sufficient quality, relevance, and currency to merit publication
- To minimize any biases that might be caused by the author's gender, culture, or stature
- To ensure that articles are factually accurate and employ standard methods accepted within the community
- To provide authors with feedback that will assist them with making changes in content, organization, and style



Blind Reviews

- You volunteer or are asked to review a manuscript
- You receive a manuscript to review (rarely paid for reviewing articles; sometimes paid a small stipend for reviewing textbooks)
- Comment text of document; provide a written summary
- Approve, Approve with changes, Reject (on the basis of **novelty** and **appropriateness**)
- NB. You can't use the material you read, and you are not allowed to contact the author directly. **Please respect the integrity of the process.**



Reviewing the Paper

- Read through the paper and note your initial reactions to content, organization, and format. Do not record these on the paper.
- Read through the paper a second time and examine it for flaws in style, punctuation, and grammar.
- Circle a few examples of these flaws and show how to correct some of them. **DO NOT** correct all the flaws (you are not an editor); simply point out patterns. Use a **black pen** (not a pencil).
- Refer to the textbook for definitions (pp. 188-244) or use the supplied *Style Cribsheet*.
- Also include any of your earlier observations about content, organization, and format.



Reviewing the Paper

- Using the supplied *Blind Review Form*, summarize any problems you discovered and recommend appropriate changes.
- Provide both positive as well as negative feedback.
- Note that some stylistic flaws may not need to be addressed as they are part of engineering discourse (i.e., passive voice, noun strings, and nominalizations). But point out where these patterns are excessive or used unnecessarily.
- Submit 2 hard copies of the marked-up paper and the completed *Blind Review Form* in the ENSC 803 dropbox.
- **Due Monday, June 25.**



Conclusion

Reflections: Which of the preceding style patterns do you find in your writing?