

## College Writing Course #1 – The Power Is In the Verb

College writing, just like professional writing, is a skill anyone can learn. Good grammar and d punctuation are necessary. That goes without saying – for any writing except poetry. This series will focus on what you can learn to improve your style and, frankly, sound academic.

You need to improve your verbs. We all need to enhance our verbs. Every academic writer must upgrade his verbs. It cannot be said often enough – expand your verb knowledge!

I'll begin with a simple rule –

### **Let the verb be the action in your sentence.**

That seems simple. Didn't we all learn in elementary school that a verb is an action word? OF course we did. But in the years since "Spot runs." our writing style has become muddled. Let's take it to a "Word Wash" and get back to clear, strong verbs.

Put all the action of a sentence into the verb. Don't bury the action in a noun or blur it across the entire sentence.

*The improvement of the usage of verbs by college students in the USA is now our concern.*

..whew! Now there is a sentence and a half! The sentence structure is entirely correct. But talk about your MUDDY? Here is a better version:

*College Students in the USA should write with first-class verbs.*

Even simpler sentences deserve attention. Of course it is not always possible, but replace the verb *to be* with something more descriptive whenever possible. Here are a few examples

It will be different	better→	It will differ
is interesting to me	better→	interests me
this paper is an analysis	better→	this paper analyzes



## **Nominalization**

Nominalization simply means turning another part of speech like a verb into a noun with the suffix -tion. They really suck the action out of the verb because they contain action-ality without being the verb your writing deserves.

I can't say don't use them, but be as sure as you can be that the verb, not the nominalization, is the focus of the sentence.

Here are a few of the MANY we use every day.

- evaluation
- execution
- collision
- decision
- solution

## **Verbization**

Verbization is more-or-less the opposite of nominalization. It is using a noun as a verb. True, it is a valid usage in a few instances but current television slang has made it allowable to use almost any noun that way. If you are writing ad copy, go ahead. However, in academic writing of any kind you will sound less than well-read if you mis-use parts of speech. As you progress in your career you will pick up the acceptable jargon of your profession, but as a student it is a risk you don't need.

In a word, avoid it like the linguistic plague it is. If you are in doubt check in a dictionary and thesaurus to find a better action verb than one that is a noun.

Have a look at these words all too often used as verbs:

- office
- parent
- impact
- medal
- liaison

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