Avoiding Nominalizations

VOCABULARY

Nominalization
A verb or an adjective (ending in -ing, -tion, or -ness) disguised as a noun. The word “nominalization” is itself a nominalization! It is created from a combination of the verb “nominalize” and the suffix “-tion.”

THE RULE
1. Avoid using nominalizations by using active verbs.
2. If a nominalization is the cause for a wordy phrase, see if you can eliminate it with one word.

PRACTICE Let’s practice using Rule #1.

Error: The decision to construct a health science building was made by the university trustees. (Note how the nominalization leads to a passive voice verb and wordiness.)

Correction: The university trustees decided to construct a health science building. (Converting the nominalization to a verb makes the sentence more concise.)

Error: Mike’s hope was for preservation of his relationship with Molly, but Tony’s meddling make the break-up an inevitability. (Note how the nominalizations here lead to the weak “to be” verb “was” as well as to wordiness.)

Correction: Mike hoped to preserve his relationship with Molly, but Tony’s meddling made the break-up inevitable. (More concise!)

PRACTICE Let’s practice using Rule #2.

Error: The procedural change resulted in an increase in enrollment and retention rates. (Note the wordiness of this sentence.)

Correction: The procedural change increased enrollment and retention rates. (Better!)