

Grammar Worksheets: Excessive Nominalizations, Answers and Teaching Tips

Primary Worksheet

1. The steering committee raised an objection to the proposed parking garage north of the stadium.

General Teaching Tips: Students have a tough time with this worksheet because the sentences sound okay to them, and there are no grammatical errors.

Take a sentence, # 1 for example, and have the students count the number of words. Sentence #1 has 15 words. Have the students circle the words that end in "tion" or "cion." These words are usually nouns, and sometimes they can be converted to verbs.

In sentence 1, the word "objection" ends in "tion." Ask them if the "tion" word has a verb equivalent. In this case, the verb equivalent is "object."

Rewrite the sentence with the agent (the doer of the action) as the subject, and the main action as the verb. "The steering committee objected to the proposed parking garage north of the stadium."

Ask the students to count the words in the revised sentence: 13.

Going from 15 words to 13 is a good thing (stress "less is more"), and getting rid of a weak verb, like "raised" and converting a nominalization ("objection") to a verb, help make the sentence easier to understand.

Revised: The steering committee objected to the proposed parking garage north of the stadium.

2. When the faculty senate has made a determination about the desirability of a lecture series, a proposal will be presented to the chancellor. (Hint. Perhaps we have ONE useful nominalization.)

Revised: When the faculty senate determines the desirability of a lecture series, a proposal will be presented to the chancellor.

Teaching Tip: Some students will want to convert the main clause from passive to active. That's okay. Some may even take the noun "proposal" and turn it into a verb, "propose." Encourage this, but don't dwell on it.

Revised: When the faculty senate determines the desirability of a lecture series, it will propose the idea to the chancellor.

Revised: When the faculty senate determines that a lecture series is desirable, it will propose the idea to the chancellor.

Teaching Tip: This last sentence does not add much, but some students write it. That's fine.

3. Negligence on the part of hospital workers was the reason for the failure of the kidney machine.

Teaching Tip: Students can take the word "Negligence," a noun, and convert it to an adjective. They can also take the word "failure," a noun, and convert it to "fail," a verb.

The more creative students will eliminate "the reason for" and replace it with "because." Encourage this. Some students will also want to use the verb "break" – past tense broke – to convey the entire idea very succinctly, as in this revised example.

Revised: Negligent hospital workers broke the kidney machine.

Revised: The kidney machine broke because of negligent hospital workers.

Revised: Negligent hospital workers caused the kidney machine to fail.

Revised: The kidney machine failed because of negligent hospital workers.

Teaching Tip: Stress going from "Negligence" (noun) to "Negligent" (adjective) and going from "failure" (noun) to "fail" (verb).

4. Mercy Hospital made a decision to expand its geriatric facilities.

Revised: Mercy Hospital made a decided to expand its geriatric facilities.

Teaching Tip: The key to this simple sentence is to go from "decision" (a noun) to "decided" (a verb).

5. It was the intention of the screening committee to interview all candidates face to face.

Revised: The screening committee intended to interview all candidates face to face.

Teaching Tip: We go from "intention" (a noun) to "intend" (a verb). In this example, it may be useful to suggest a change of tense, from past to present.

Revised: The screening committee intends to interview all candidates face to face.

6. The investor made an incorrect assumption about the volatility of Brazil's emerging economy. (Some information might be missing in the original sentence. Did the investor think that the volatility of Brazil's emerging economy was high or low? How can the meaning be made clearer?)

Revised: The investor incorrectly assumed the high volatility of Brazil's emerging economy.

Teaching Tip: The key to this sentence is to take the nominalization "assumption" and turn it into a verb "assumed." Stress to the students that they must stay in the same tense ("made" is past tense, so "assumed" should also be in past tense).

The word "high" clarifies what the investor means.

7. The parole board did not give an explanation for the early release of such a dangerous inmate.

Revised: The parole board did not explain the early release of such a dangerous inmate.

Teaching Tip: We go from “explanation” (noun) to “explain” (verb). In doing so, the resulting syntax forces us to convert a prepositional phrase (for the early release) to a simple noun as a direct object (early release).

Teaching Tip: Some students may write, “The parole board did not explain why such a dangerous inmate was released early.”

This is good logic, because the student has gone from a nominalization (release) to a verb (release). Reward a student who does this.

8. It is my hope that you apply this material.

Revised: I hope that you apply this material.

Teaching Tip: We went from 9 words to 7; we made the agent (I) the subject, and we converted a noun “hope” to the main verb “hope.” This sentence allows students to see that sometimes a verb form differs from a noun form by its use in a sentence.

Excessive Nominalizations, Supplemental Exercises 1 – Suggested Responses.

1. Marie resented that her husband always took control of their children’s extracurricular activities.

Revised: Marie resented that her husband always controlled their children’s extracurricular activities.

2. The guidance counselor made a suggestion that graduating seniors should submit early applications to the colleges of their choice.

Revised: The guidance counselor suggested that graduating seniors should apply early to the colleges of their choice.

3. It is the judge’s recommendation that the children live with their maternal grandparents.

Revised: The judge recommends that the children live with their maternal grandparents.

4. When he plays soccer, Osman makes an effort to pass the ball to an open player.

Revised: When he plays soccer, Osman tries to pass the ball to an open player.

5. As soon as she picked us up from school, Aunt Jessie made a decision to take us to Disney World.

Revised: As soon as she picked us up from school, Aunt Jessie decided to take us to Disney World.

6. It is the expectation of the judicial review board that the candidate answer all questions truthfully.

Revised: The judicial review board expects that the candidate answer all questions truthfully.

7. The film director's house has the appearance of a Hollywood movie set.

Revised: The film director's house looks like a Hollywood movie set.

8. Although she never carried it out, Frances made a promise to her mother that she would call every week.

Revised: Although she never did, Frances promised her mother that she would call every week.

9. The critic E.M. Forster makes a distinction between round characters and flat characters.

Revised: The critic E.M. Forster distinguishes between round characters and flat characters.

10. Teenagers sometimes feel that their parents cause them embarrassment.

Revised: Teenagers sometimes feel that their parents embarrass them.

11. On his deathbed, the gangster made a confession about his theft of the Hope Diamond.

Revised: On his deathbed, the gangster confessed to stealing the Hope Diamond.

12. It was Mayor Richards's understanding that the bicycle path would be built with funding from the federal government.

Revised: Mayor Richards believed that the bicycle path would be built with funding from the federal government.

13. The scholar Jackson Rowley was of the opinion that excessive in-breeding of cats led to some strains having six toes.

Revised: The scholar Jackson Rowley believed (or, more formal, "opined") that excessive in-breeding of cats led to some strains having six toes.

14. Because of the singer's persistent denials of his drug addiction, a cancellation of the tour ensued.

Revised: Because the singer persistently denied his drug addiction, the tour was cancelled.

15. When Vincent made a declaration to me that he had a preference for comedy over drama, I laughed and expressed agreement with him.

Revised: When Vincent told me that he preferred comedy over drama, I laughed and agreed with him.

16. It is my suggestion that you engage in the application of these principles.

Revised: I suggest that you apply these principles.