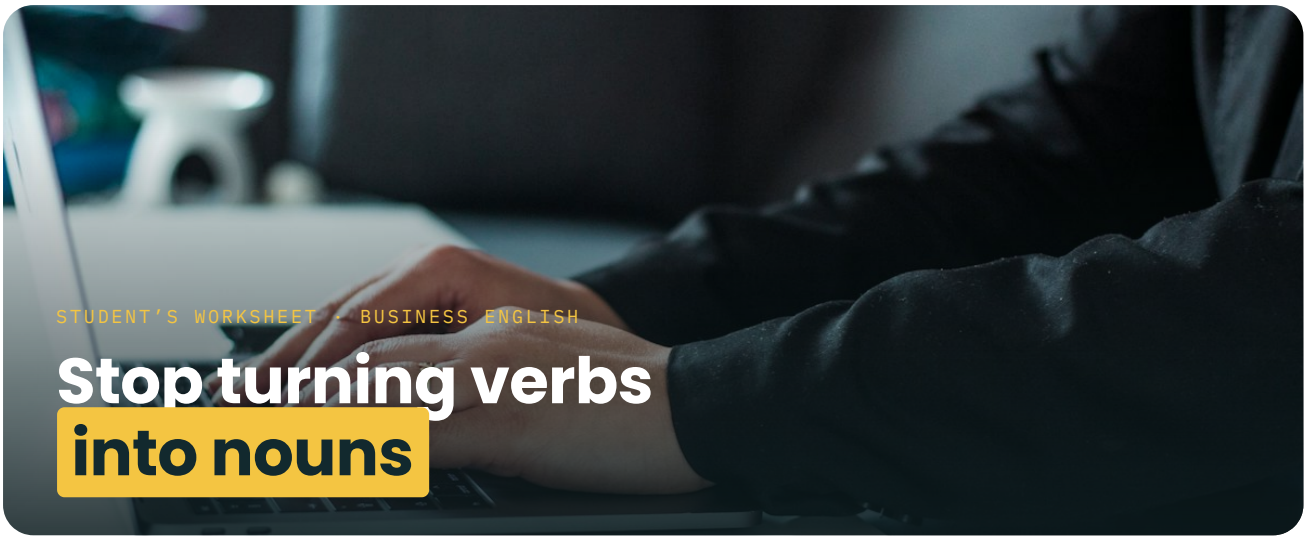


STUDENT'S WORKSHEET · BUSINESS ENGLISH

Stop turning verbs into nouns

LEVEL
B1 · Intermediate

TIME
60 min

SKILLS
Listening · Writing · Grammar · Speaking

Learning objectives

In this lesson, you can:

- recognise nominalisation (nouns made from verbs) in business writing
- form nouns from verbs with -tion, -ment, -ance, -age
- rewrite long, noun-heavy sentences with clear verbs
- decide when a noun is the natural choice

Key vocabulary

nominalisation · decision · increase · usage · breakage · statement · receipt · rephrase · straightforward · sophisticated

Materials

- this worksheet
- video: *Stop turning verbs into nouns: Business writing skills part 6* (Ohsten Words, YouTube, 1 min 59 s)

1 Warm up

SPEAKING

Look at the pictures. What can you see? How are they connected to the topic? Then answer the questions with your teacher.



PICTURE A · writing an email



PICTURE B · a printer in an office



PICTURE C · a stainless steel factory

1. What do you write at work every week: emails, reports, presentations?
2. Do you prefer short, simple messages or formal, detailed ones? Why?
3. Read these two sentences. Which is clearer? "Sales have increased." / "There has been an increase in sales."

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2 Vocabulary preparation

VOCABULARY

Part A Match the words with the definitions.

sophisticated *(adj)* · breakage *(n)* · rephrase *(v)* · formality *(n)* · straightforward *(adj)* · usage *(n)*

1. _____ clear and easy to understand; not complicated
2. _____ to say or write something again in different words
3. _____ the way something is used
4. _____ complex and intelligent-sounding; showing experience
5. _____ damage that happens when something breaks
6. _____ a serious, official style of language or behaviour

Part B Write the noun form of each verb. All the nouns are in the video.

1. decide → _____
2. increase → _____
3. use → _____
4. break → _____
5. state → _____
6. receive → _____

3 Main input: watch and learn

LISTENING · WRITING

Business writers often turn verbs into nouns to sound more professional. This short video from a business-writing channel explains why that can be a problem. Watch it with English captions.

VIDEO

Stop turning verbs into nouns: Business writing skills part 6
Ohsten Words · YouTube · 20 June 2023 · 1 min 59 s · free, no login
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_e7IWDuF1sk

Watch once. What is the main advice in the video? Write one sentence.

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Language focus: nominalisation (verb → noun)

Nominalisation means using a noun instead of a verb: *decide → a decision*. Many nouns are formed from verbs with these endings:

Ending	Verb	Noun
-tion / -sion	decide, inform, utilise	decision, information, utilisation
-ment	state, agree, improve	statement, agreement, improvement
-ance / -ence	perform, prefer	performance, preference
-age	use, break	usage, breakage
no change	increase, delay, change	an increase, a delay, a change

Nouns usually need **extra words**: *Sales have increased* (3 words) → *There has been an increase in sales* (7 words). Use a **verb** to be clear and direct. Use a **noun** when it is the natural word (*a receipt, a statement*) or in formal reports. British *-ise* (utilise) = American *-ize* (utilize).

Practice: Rewrite the sentences with a verb. Make them shorter and clearer.

1. We made a decision to close the office. → We _____
2. There was a delay in the delivery. → The delivery _____
3. The team carried out an investigation of the problem. → The team _____
4. Our recommendation is the replacement of the old software. → We recommend _____
5. There has been an improvement in customer satisfaction. → Customer satisfaction _____
6. We are in agreement with your proposal. → We _____

4 Listening comprehension

LISTENING

Part A Watch again. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)? Circle.

1. According to the video, business writing often turns verbs into nouns to appear more sophisticated. **T / F**
2. "There has been an increase in sales" is shorter than "Sales have increased". **T / F**
3. In the printer example, the nominalisations are "usage" and "breakage". **T / F**
4. The video suggests "We use stainless steel" as a simpler sentence. **T / F**
5. The video says you should never use nominalisation. **T / F**
6. If a simple sentence sounds unremarkable, perhaps the information is not worth mentioning. **T / F**

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Part B Choose the correct answer.

1. Why do business writers nominalise, according to the video?
   (a) to make sentences shorter (b) to appear more sophisticated (c) to avoid grammar mistakes
2. What is the problem with unnecessary nominalisation?
   (a) it makes sentences longer and more complicated (b) it is grammatically wrong
   (c) it sounds too informal
3. Which is a natural use of a noun in the video?
   (a) I made a breakage of the printer. (b) We specialise in the utilisation of steel.
   (c) I have a receipt for this t-shirt.
4. If your sentence sounds too basic when you simplify it, the problem could be...
   (a) the grammar (b) your message (c) the reader

Part C Think and answer.

1. Rewrite "We specialise in the utilisation of stainless steel" in two ways.

2. Why do people use formal nouns in business writing?

3. Think of a document you write at work. Where could you use more verbs?

5 Speaking practice and discussion

SPEAKING

Part A Choose TWO cue cards. Talk about each card with your teacher for 1–2 minutes.

Cue card 1: My emails
- Who do I write to?
- Formal or simple?
- One example

Cue card 2: Reports
- Long sentences?
- Too many nouns?
- How to improve

Cue card 3: Clear writing
- Why it matters
- For clients
- For colleagues

Cue card 4: A confusing message
- What it said
- Why it was unclear
- What happened

Cue card 5: Sounding professional
- Formal words
- Simple words
- The right balance

STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

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Part B Answer the questions with your teacher. Give reasons and examples.

1. Is it more professional to write in a formal style? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever received an email that was difficult to understand? What was the problem?
3. When is a noun the best choice in your work documents?
4. Do you think long, formal sentences hide weak ideas? Give an example.
5. What is one change you will make to your writing after this lesson?

6 Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

REVIEW

Complete the sentences. Then tell your teacher.

1. Nominalisation means _____
2. Three nouns made from verbs: _____
3. One sentence I can make clearer with a verb: _____
4. I should only use a noun when _____

Takeaway: Nominalisation turns verbs into nouns (*decide → decision*). It can sound sophisticated, but it adds words and makes sentences harder to read. Prefer verbs (*Sales have increased*), and use a noun only when it makes your writing more, not less, straightforward.

+ Optional extension / homework

WRITING

Choose a short paragraph from a work email or report (remove any confidential information). Underline three nominalisations and rewrite the sentences with verbs. Bring both versions to the next class.

Alternative activity: Write a 100-word email to a client about a delay in a delivery, first in a very formal, noun-heavy style, then in a clear style with verbs.

References

Ohsten Words. (2023, June 20). *Stop turning verbs into nouns: Business writing skills part 6* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_e7lWDuF1sk

Original materials: vocabulary, language examples and exercises were written for NATeacher for B1 learners.

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