Nominalisation

Nominalisation means changing other types of words (verbs, adjectives or adverbs) into nouns. To do this you often need to add a suffix like –ness, –tion, –ment.

* React (verb) 🡪 reaction (noun)
* Eager (adjective) 🡪 eagerness (noun)

Nominalising verbs makes writing sound clearer and more precise. Instead of being personal and dramatic (which would work well in a story or a film) it is detached, formal, and professional. It also clearly shows the relationship between pieces of information. Nominalising your writing forces you to explain more, dig deeper, and explain the cause and effect.

* Normal: Lady Macbeth was ambitious.
* Nominalised: Lady Macbeth’s ambition….

The un-nominalised sentence is complete but doesn’t give you much information. The nominalised sentence is unfinished – to finish it, you need to add more information about Lady Macbeth’s ambition. What was it like? What did it cause or lead to?

* Lady Macbeth’s ambition *was all-consuming.*
* Lady Macbeth’s ambition *led to her decision to plot the king’s murder.*

**How to Nominalise**

First, find the key verbs in a sentence. Then nominalise them by changing their form. Try adding one of these suffixes to the end of the word:

* –ness
* –tion or -sion
* –ment
* -ty
* -ance or -ence
* -ism
* -ury

Next, rearrange the sentence so that it still makes sense with the new nouns. This can be the tricky part! Sentences always need to contain a verb, so you can’t just take them all out completely. You might need to add in some simpler verbs that show the connection between pieces of information, such as “causes, leads to, suggests, means that…” and so on.

* Normal: When cars **emit** toxic gasses, they **pollute** the air.
* Nominalised: The **emission** of toxic gasses causes air **pollution**.
* Normal: Wealth is **distributed** around the world very unfairly, and many people **starve.**
* Nominalised: The unfair **distribution** of wealth around the world leads to **starvation**.