Introduction
Nominalisation is the transformation of a precise verb into another sentence constituent, usually a noun (nominalisation), sometimes an adjective (adjectivalisation). This syntactic transformation elicits the grammatical necessity to add an imprecise (i.e., perfunctory) verb (see Box).

Collectively the nominalised and the perfunctory verb add to other types of syntactic circumlocution such as dependent clauses and absolute phrases. It could be argued that usage of a perfunctory verb is a semantic distraction, characterised by imprecision and non-professional tone. However, the syntactic taxonomy provides insight into the underlying cause of the distraction and, in turn, its revision.

On the positive side, nominalisation results from thematic focus; that is, placement into the subject position the conceptual topic of a sentence rather than agents responsible for the action. The first sentence in this article is an example: Nominalisation is the transformation of a precise verb into another sentence constituent. Such nominalisation is often accompanied by the verb to be. Another verb characteristic is usage of the passive voice as in The taxonomy as non-professional tone is justified by the lack of verb precision. Overall, nominalisation contributes to an academic formal descriptive style. However, on the negative side, nominalisation results in burying a precise action verb and replacing it with an actionless linking verb or unnecessary perfunctory verb.

The examples in this article are organised according to sections of a journal article (Experimental and Contextual), their conceptual components, and the sentence constituent into which the precise verb is nominalised. In addition, an example of verb adjectivalisation is presented.

Experimental sections

Part 1 – Materials and Methods section: Method

Example: Nominalised sentence subject

The isolation of the tertiary component was accomplished by the following:

Revision (de-nominalisation)

The tertiary component was isolated by the following:

Notes
The most typical nominalisation involves a precise verb that is transformed into a noun subject. In the example, the specific verb isolated is nominalised into the sentence subject isolation, grammatically necessitating the usage of the perfunctory verb accomplished. In addition to imprecision, over-use of perfunctory verbs results in synonymous verbs (synonymy) each with slightly different connotations, especially in the Materials and Methods section where the succession of methods necessitates repetition of action verbs.

In the revision, de-nominalisation results in (1) precision: the perfunctory verb accomplished is replaced by isolated and (2) concision: the perfunctory verb and the preposition of are deleted, so that the revision consists of three fewer words.
However, when the nominalised subject is thematically focused on the conventional usage in a discipline, its usage along with a perfunctory verb (e.g. perform) may be preferred. For example, In situ hybridisation was performed, rather than cells were in situ hybridised.

**Part 2 – Results section:**

*Data-based observation*

**Example:** Nominalised direct object

Compound A caused a significant inhibition of leukotriene synthesis.

**Revision (de-nominalisation)**

Compound A significantly inhibited leukotriene synthesis.

**Notes**

Inhibited is clear and direct language whereas caused a significant inhibition is indirect. In the example, the potential precise verb inhibited is nominalised into inhibition grammatically necessitating the usage of the perfunctory verb function. De-nominalisation (by supplying → supply) eliminates the perfunctory verb function and the preposition by, also reducing the word count from 11 to 9.

**Part 2 – Discussion section:**

**Limitation**

**Example:** Adjectivalised past participle

Baseline counts could contribute to altered haematocrit.

**Revision (de-adjectivalisation)**

Baseline counts could alter haematocrit.

**Notes**

Transformation of a verb into an adjective (or adjectival) necessitates the use of a perfunctory verb. In the example, the transformation of the verb alter into the adjectival participle altered necessitates the addition of the perfunctory (phrasal) verb contribute to, so that the sentence is grammatical. A phrasal verb consists of a verb and a preposition-like word, such as contribute to.

### Contextual sections

**Part 1 – Introduction section:**

**Research hypothesis**

*Example:* Nominalised gerund object in a prepositional phrase

The erythrocyte may function by supplying developing tissues with linolenic acid.

**Revision (de-nominalisation)**

The erythrocyte may supply developing tissues with linolenic acid.

**Notes**

In the example, the potential precise verb supply occurs as the gerund object of the preposition by, thereby necessitating usage of the perfunctory verb function. De-nominalisation (by supplying → supply) eliminates the perfunctory verb function and the preposition by, also reducing the word count from 11 to 9.

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### Common perfunctory verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accomplished¹</th>
<th>Given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attained</td>
<td>Made</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conducted</td>
<td>Obtained</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Contribute to)²</td>
<td>Occurred</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrated</td>
<td>Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Produced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effected</td>
<td>Realised</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>(Resulted in)²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executed</td>
<td>Showed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibited</td>
<td>Taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td>Used</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

¹ The past participle instead of the verb stem (e.g. accomplish) is listed because the participle is the most frequent form in the passive voice (e.g. something was accomplished). Only transitive verbs can be expressed in the passive voice, whereas intransitive verbs cannot (e.g. you cannot say ‘something was functioned’).

² Phrasal verb (see Adjectivalised Past Participle).

Another characteristic of a phrasal verb is that the preposition-like word to cannot be shifted to a position other than contiguous to the verb. In the Revision, de-adjectivalisation results in the deletion of contribute to.

**Summary**

Nominalisation + perfunctory verb, particularly subject and direct object positions, is a common distraction in the experimental sections (Materials and Methods, Results) of journal articles. Such nominalisation is less obvious in the conceptual sections (Introduction, Discussion). Although the circumlocution is a dissonance, the impression of a perfunctory verb is a nonprofessional tone. For all of the examples in this article, de-nominalisation (or de-adjectivalisation) eliminates the perfunctory verb, reinforcing the principle that the nomenclature of a syntactic distraction (e.g. nominalisation + perfunctory verb circumlocution) is a cue to its revision.

Michael Lewis Schneir, PhD
Professor, Biomedical Sciences
Ostrow School of Dentistry of University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA
schneir@usc.edu

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