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| **Verb strength chart** | | |
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| **Verb Forms** | **Verb Strength** | **Examples** |
| Command/Imperative | https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/technicalwriting/wp-content/uploads/sites/296/2017/12/arrow-updown-1-32x300.jpg  **WEAK** | **Maintain** the machine properly!  **Write** the report! |
| **Active Indicative\***  (Subject performs the action of the verb) | He **maintains** the machine regularly.  She **writes** reports frequently. |
| Active conditional | She **would maintain** the machine **if** he would let her.  He **would write** reports if he had more training. |
| Gerunds ( *verb* -ing)  Infinitives (to *verb*)  (*these do not function as verbs in your sentence; actual verbs are highlighted in yellow*) | While **maintaining** the machine, he gets quite dirty.  Report **writing** takes skill.  It takes a lot of time **to maintain** this machine.  **To write** effectively, one must get a sense of the audience. |
| Passive  (Subject receives the action of the verb)  Passive Conditional  Expressing a state of being (is, seems, appears) | The machine **is maintained** by him.  It **would be maintained** by her if…  The report **was written** by her.  Reports **would be written** by him if…  The report seems fine. |
| Nominalizations (*verbs turned into abstract nouns)*  Participles (*nouns or adjectives that used to be verbs*) | Machine **maintenance** is dirty work.  A well-**maintained** machine is a thing of beauty.  **Written** work must be free of errors. |

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| **Bland vs. descriptive verbs** | |
| **Bland Verbs** | **Descriptive Verbs** |
| Signal Verbs:  Says States Talks about Discusses Writes | Describe the rhetorical purpose behind what the author/speaker “says”:  Explains, clarifies Describes, illustrates Claims, argues, maintains Asserts, stresses, emphasizes Recommends, urges, suggests |
| Is, are, was, were being been  Is *verb*-ing | Instead of indicating what or how something “**is**,” describe what it **DOES**, by choosing a precise, active verb.  Replace progressive form (*is \_\_\_ing*) with  indicative form  *She is describing* →*She describes* |
| Get, gets | Usually too colloquial (or passive); instead you could use more specific verbs such as  Become, acquire, obtain, receive, prepare, achieve, earn, contract, catch, understand, appreciate, *etc*. |
| Do, does | Avoid using the *emphatic* tense in formal writing:  It *does* work →  it **works**.  I *do*crack when I see apostrophe errors → I **crack** when I see apostrophe errors.  Instead:  Perform, prepare, complete, *etc*. |
| Has, have  Has to, have to | This verb has many potential meanings! Try to find a more specific verb that “have/has” or “has to”:   * She **owns** a car * They **consume/eat** a meal * The product **includes** many optional features * The process **entails** several steps   Instead of “have to” try:  Must, require, need, *etc*. |
| Make | Build, construct, erect, devise, create, design, manufacture, produce, prepare, earn, *etc*.  Make a recommendation → recommend Make a promise → promise Make a plan → plan |

EXERCISE 2.6 Improve the following sentences by elevating the verb and cutting clutter

1. Market share **is being lost** by the company, as **is shown** in the graph in Figure 3.
2. A descrip**tion** of the product **is given** by the author.
3. An investiga**tion** of the issue **has been conducted**by her.
4. His task is**regional database systems troubleshooting handbook preparation.**
5. While a recommendat**ion** **has been made** by the committee, an agree**ment** to increase the budget will have **to be approved** by the committee.

EXERCISE 2.7 Revision practice

The following paragraph on **The Effects of Energy Drinks** does not conform to the 7Cs and contains far too many “to be” verbs. Revise this paragraph so that it has a clear topic sentence, coherent transitions, correct syntax, and concise phrasing. In particular, try to eliminate all “to be” verbs (*am, is, are, was, were, being, been, be*), and rephrase using strong, descriptive, active verbs. The first 7 “to be” verbs are highlighted for you. Try to cut the word count (260 words) in half.

Energy Drinks are able to be consumed in many varied and different ways by people all over the world. Moreover, drinking these energy drinks is able to provide people in today’s society with the helpful benefits of increased awareness and energy. Besides, even though there are enhancements that may be present from drinking an energy drink, the negative side effects are posing more of a threat to a person than the energy boost that is able to be achieved. In a survey that was taken in the United States at an American university, it was reported that fifty one percent of participants were consuming greater than three energy drinks each month in the semester [1]. Looking at this statistic, it can be seen that a majority of students in university are drinking energy a large amount of drinks on a very regular basis. Which can be the cause of some health problems experienced by students. In the same study, it was also shown that energy drinks are capable of helping to increase energy and athletic endurance; for those who drank it. Despite the fact that there are some benefits to be had from drinking energy drinks, there is the problem of the negative side affects that are caused by the drinking of these energy drinks. However, the side affects that were commonly reported in the study are: headaches, and “energy crashes” (Smith 5). Being a potentially more severe problem than the minor problems of headaches and “crashes;” there is definitely the possibility of people which are becoming addicted to caffeine.

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| **Key characteristics of effective professional style** | |
| **Poor Style** | **Effective Style** |
| Low VERB/WORD ratio per sentence | High VERB/WORD ratio per sentence |
| Excessive ‘is/are’ verbs | Concrete, descriptive verbs |
| Excessive passive verb constructions | Active verb constructions |
| Abstract or vague nouns | Concrete and specific nouns |
| Many prepositional phrases | Few prepositional phrases |
| Subject and verb are separated by words or phrases | Subject and verb are close together |
| Verb is near the end of the sentence | Verb is near the beginning of the sentence |
| Main idea (subject-verb relationship) is difficult to find | Main idea is clear |
| Sentence must be read more than once to understand it | Meaning is clear the first time you read it |
| Long, rambling sentences | Precise, specific sentences |