

This worksheet confronts a writing problem that may go undetected. Although readers may not notice the problem, it still affects how they perceive your writing.

Weaker: The philanthropist is careful to give only to organizations that have low administrative costs.

Stronger: The philanthropist gives only to organizations with low administrative costs.

Do the sentences mean exactly the same thing? No. There is a subtle difference. The first sentence underscores the care with which the philanthropist gives. However, unless you mean to emphasize this care, the second sentence conveys the message more strongly than the first. The second sentence is also shorter by four words. Shorter is usually better. Length matters sometimes, but sometimes it doesn't.

Weaker: William was late to the meeting.

Stronger: William arrived late to the meeting.

These two sentences use the same number of words, six. However, note how the verb in the second sentence, arrived, sounds more vigorous, describes the act of attending the meeting more clearly, than the verb in the first, was, which merely describes a state of being.

The main culprits include the verbs "to be" and "to have." These verbs may hide in the forms listed below. Any time you use one of these verbs (**Be, Is, Are, Was, Been, Being, Were, Has, Have, Having, Had**) ask yourself if the sentence should be rewritten.

To rewrite sentences using strong verbs: 1. Underline any use of **Be, Is, Are, Was, Been, Being, Were, Has, Have, Having, Had**. 2. Look for a **noun** or **adjective** that you can convert to a strong verb. 3. Rewrite the sentence using that strong verb.

1. John is the manager of the produce department.
2. John is the manager of the produce department. (noun – predicate nominative)
3. John manages the produce department.

The University of Houston provides a good worksheet on using strong verbs. Take a look.

<http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/WC/Files/Tipsheet%20Using%20Strong%20Verbs%20-%20A>

Exercises: Rewrite each sentence to make the main verb stronger.

1. Janet Smith is the supervisor of the customer service department.

2. Walt Disney was the initiator of a mass movement in family entertainment.

3. The whole house was stressed and angry with one another over my parents' fighting over the bills.

Grammar Worksheets: Using Strong Verbs

4. In the distance there is a giant eruption from the water, as a 100-pound sailfish jumps out.

5. Jenny Millhouse is the owner of two gas stations in Florida City.

6. The sugar cane refinery is the employer that is the driving force for employment in south central Florida.

7. The student who is responsible for conducting the survey and reporting the results to the school administration is James Archer.

8. If a manager is thinking about changing a policy statement, she has the responsibility to inform both her immediate supervisor and her employees.

9. The shipped product was different from the one that was advertised in the catalog.

10. The Foster family has a fruit stand near Krome Avenue.

11. After a questionable call at home plate, the manager had an argument with the umpire.

12. Last week, the class had a discussion about Kate Chopin's novel The Awakening.
