

Power turns your computer on. Power words turn your reader on. The power words of the English language are **verbs** and **nouns**.

Of the two, the **verb** is the most essential word of a sentence. Why? A verb tells the reader what the subject is doing or what state of being the subject is in. The **verb** is the engine that propels your sentence. Without a verb, the sentence goes nowhere.

### Kinds of Verbs

**Action verbs** are those that depict action, like “leap, dive, embrace, sing, eat.” (Other examples?)

**State of being verbs** are forms of the words “to be.” “Am, are, was, were, will be, has been,” etc. To see all forms of the “to be” verb, go to FAQs, p. 57.

Of the two, action verbs **prove** the most powerful. Why? They **ignite** imagined movement in your reader’s brain. **See** the *Declaration of Independence* for superb use of action verbs. **Substitute** action verbs for “to be” verbs to **build** muscle in your writing.

In the sentence “I was here,” (“was” is a form of the state of being verb “to be,”) how can you make this a much stronger sentence, one that engages the reader’s imagination, one that will **ESCAPE** the mundane?

Substitute an action verb for the “to be” verb “was.” Possibilities: I **jogged** here. I **crawled** here. I **danced** here. I **hopped** here. I **pirouetted** here. I **dragged** myself here. See the verbal image in your brain?

In these three lists of similar action verbs, which elicit the most powerful image in your mind’s eye?

leap	jump	spring
tackle	embrace	enfold
pinch	crush	mash
march	stroll	amble

**Key takeaway: Action verbs ignite the imagination in your reader’s mind.**

**However. When there is no other verb to use than a “to be” verb, use it without hesitation. You’ll know when.**

**WTET introduces** the three **COMPUTER COMMANDS** that most affect the verb:

**BOLD** reminds us to use power verbs, aka action verbs.

To **ESCAPE** the mundane reminds us why we use power verbs.

**REPLACE** all forms of the “to be” verb with an action verb for strong, concise writing.

#### 10-MINUTE POP EXERCISE

Write a 50-word description of yourself without using any form of the verb “to be.”

### REVIEW the **passive voice** versus the **active voice**.

In the **passive voice**, the subject of the verb **receives** the action.

**ex:** Record profits **were produced** by the direct marketing team. The quarterly report **was released** by the vice president. You **are loved** by me.

In the **active voice**, the subject of the verb **does** the action and the object of the verb **receives** the action.

**ex:** Our direct marketing team **produced** record profits. The vice president **released** the quarterly figures. I **love** you.

Why use the **active voice** instead of the **passive voice**?

- Simpler
- Shorter
- More direct
- More forceful
- Faster
- Stronger

**Caveat:** There is a role for the **passive voice**. It is best used for:

Emphasis. To emphasize a point, position your main point at the end of a sentence and use the passive voice.

**ex:** Record profits **were due** to increased participation by every single employee.

Clarity. If it's not clear who or what is doing the action, use the passive voice to help the reader.

**ex:** Stores **were invaded** by early morning shoppers.

Or, if the subject of the verb is not as important as the object.

**ex:** The CEO **was subjected** to shareholders' anger.

### WTET introduces the **COMPUTER COMMAND:**

**INSERT** the active voice for the passive voice wherever you find it, unless the passive voice is needed for any of the three preceding reasons.

### **REVIEW** the **adverb**, a modifier.

An **adverb** is the part of speech that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb, and usually answers the questions **how, where, why, when** and **to what degree**.

Most adverbs are formed by adding "ly" to an adjective. Thus the adjective beautiful becomes the adverb beautifully.<sup>2</sup>

**Q.** Which of the following are more precise and concise?

**ex:** The man walked **slowly** and **aimlessly** along the beach.

or: The man **ambled** along the beach.

The man **strolled** the beach.

The man **shuffled** along the beach.

He **trudged** along the beach.

**ex:** The man walked **purposefully** and **quickly** down the road.

or: The man **strode** down the road.

The man **marched** down the road.

The man **patrolled** the road.

To WTET writers, adverbs have little use other than to bloat sentences.

Their main job is to modify other modifiers. Most writers use them to prop up weak verbs, which they wouldn't need to do if they had used the strongest verbs they could find in the first place.

**Key takeaway: Let muscular verbs do the heavy work to spare your readers from plowing through thickets of modifiers, i.e. adverbs.**

### WTET Introduces the **COMPUTER COMMAND:**

**DELETE** qualifiers, modifiers (such as adverbs) and extraneous words whenever possible.

### **Review COMPUTER COMMANDS thus far:**

**BOLD** verbs for concise and strong writing.

**ESCAPE** the mundane by using **BOLD** verbs.

**REPLACE** all forms of the "to be" verb with an action verb.

**INSERT** active voice for the passive voice wherever you find it.

### PRACTICE

**List** 10 verbs that are synonyms for the verb "to encourage."

**List** 15 nouns that are synonyms for the noun "employee."

**Draft** a letter to a prospective employee, someone you really want to hire. Your company has recently downsized and your prospect knows it. Your company has also recently been involved in a product safety recall. Your letter will try to persuade this person to work for you.

**Read** your all-action-verb 50-word self profile aloud.

**Review** your list of 15 verbs that are synonyms of "make." (Here are some, scrambled.)

dropceau	mofr
erteca	trucncost
scompeo	ifonash
bactefia	remaf
edvesi	negsid
tanfurmaceu	shisbeatl
aveew	gorfe
goritaien	