

Students who are new to college-level writing often struggle to be specific and descriptive. This handout is intended to help students, especially non-native speakers of English, improve their writing by using a wider variety of noun structures, including gerunds, infinitives, and noun clauses. Becoming comfortable with these structures will give you a greater range of options for discussing difficult or complex topics. It will also help you to combine related ideas into a single sentence.

As you probably know, a **noun** is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea. *Firefighter*, *Zimbabwe*, *balloon*, and *love* are examples of nouns. However, we sometimes need to find a name for a specific balloon or describe the firefighter in some way? Then we might need to use more than a **simple noun** like a **noun phrase** a group of words made up of a noun and the words that modify or describe it.

Simple noun: balloon
 Noun phrase: the beautiful balloon

Simple noun: firefighter
 Noun phrase: the beautiful firefighter

Sometimes we need to express even more complicated ideas. How do you name an action, for example? We know that actions are contained in **verbs**, but sometimes we want to talk about the action itself instead of talking about somebody *doing* the action. We have three options for naming actions: nouns ending in *-ion* or *-ment*, infinitives, and gerunds.

The suffixes *-ion* and *-ment* turn verbs into nouns. For example, the verb *resign* becomes the noun *resignation*. Sometimes there will also be a change to the last syllable of the verb: the verb *resign* becomes the noun *resignation*.

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For each of the following sentences, write four new versions in which you replace the X with a simple noun or noun phrase, a gerund, an infinitive, and a noun clause. Not all of the noun structures will fit into all the sentences. There will be many right answers ô use your imagination!

1. I like X.
2. The man spoke about X.
3. The students wanted X.
4. The expert said X.
5. X like ice cream.
6. I stayed home last night because of X.
7. X is responsible for the damage to company property.
8. The company needs X.

These are not the *only* right answers ô they are examples of *possible* right answers.

1. I like pizza. I like fresh, hot New York-style pizza. I like eating fresh, hot New York-style pizza. I like to eat fresh, hot New York-style pizza. I like that my girlfriend buys me fresh, hot New York-style pizza on Fridays.
2. The man spoke about debt. The man spoke about the national debt. The man spoke about reducing the national debt. The man spoke about reduction of national debt.
3. The students wanted rest. The students wanted a lot of rest. The students wanted to rest a lot after their exams.
4. The expert imagined unpleasantness. The expert imagined unpleasant things. The expert imagined the clicking of spiders. The expert imagined what unpleasant things the clicking of spiders might lead to.
5. Cats like ice cream. Happy cats like ice cream. Whichever cats are happy like ice cream.
6. I stayed home last night because of storms. I stayed home last night because of nasty storms. I stayed home last night because of the thundering. I stayed home last night because of whichever tropical storm came through thundering.
7. Someone is responsible for the damage to company property. Someone terrible is responsible for the damage to company property. Whoever is responsible for the damage to company property is terrible.
8. The company needs employees. The company needs several new employees. The company needs to hire several new employees. The company needs whatever new employees it can find.