Make main characters subjects.

Make important actions verbs.

Once upon a time, as a walk through the woods was taking place on the part of Little Red Riding Hood, the Wolf’s jump out from behind a tree occurred, causing fright in Little Red Riding Hood.

Once upon a time, Little Red Riding Hood was walking through the woods, when the Wolf jumped out from behind a tree and frightened her.

The Federalists’ argument in regard to the destabilization of government by popular democracy was based on their belief in the tendency of factions to further their self-interest at the expense of the common good.

The Federalists argued that popular democracy destabilized government, because they believed that factions tended to further their self-interest at the expense of the common good.

**Diagnose:** To predict how a reader will judge your style, do this:

a. Ignoring short (four- or five-word) introductory phrases, underline the first seven or eight words in each sentence.

b. Look for two things:
   - You have underlined abstract nouns as simple subjects.
   - You read at least six or seven words before you get to a verb.

**Analyze:** If you find such sentences, do this:

a. Decide who your main characters are.

b. Look for actions that those characters can perform, especially in nominalizations, those abstract nouns derived from verbs.

**Revise:** Once you locate the characters and their actions, do this:

a. Convert actions buried in nominalizations into verbs.

b. Make the characters the subjects of those new verbs.

c. Rewrite the sentence with conjunctions like **because, if, when, although, why, how, whether, that.**
nominalization: a verb or adjective converted into a noun.

Common Patterns of Nominalizations

• The nominalization is the subject of an empty verb:
  The intension of the committee is to audit the records.

• A nominalization follows there is or there are:
  There is no need for our further study of this problem.

• One nominalization is a subject and a second appears after an empty verb like be, seem, has, etc.:
  Our loss in sales was a result of their expansion of outlets.

• A nominalization follows an empty verb:
  The agency conducted an investigation into the matter.

• Two or three nominalizations in a row are joined by prepositions:
  We did a review of the evolution of the brain.

Useful Nominalizations

• A nominalization as a short subject refers to a previous sentence:
  These arguments all depend on a single unproven claim.

• A short nominalization replaces an awkward The fact that:
  The fact that she acknowledged the problem impressed me.
  Her acknowledgement of the problem impressed me.

• A nominalization refers to a concept so familiar to your readers that to them, it is a character:
  e.g. abortion, election, revolution
Revise these sentences so that the nominalizations are verbs and the characters are subjects of those verbs. (Characters are *italicized* and nominalizations are **boldfaced**.)

1. *Lincoln’s* **hope** was for the peaceful **preservation** of the Union, but the *South’s* **attack** on Fort Sumter made it an **inevitability**.
2. *Attempts* were made on the part of the *President’s aides* to assert his **immunity** from a *Congressional* subpoena.
3. There were **predictions** by *his supporters* that the **nominee** would receive quick **committee approval**.
4. The *author’s* **analysis** of our data omits any **citation** of sources that would provide **support** for *his criticism* of our **argument**.
5. The *health industry’s* **ability** to exert cost **controls** could lead to the *public’s decision* that *congressional action* is not needed.

6. A *papal* appeal was made to the *industrialized nations of the world* for assistance to those in *Africa* facing the threat of starvation.
7. *Attempts at explanations* for increases in *voter* participation in this year’s elections were offered by *several candidates*.
8. The agreement by the *participants* on the program was based on the assumption that there was a promise of *federal funds*.
9. There was no independent *business-sector* study of the cause of the sudden increase in the trade surplus.
10. Agreement as to the need for revisions in the terms of the treaty was reached by **the two sides**.

11. There was **uncertainty** in the White House about Serbian **intentions** in regard to **withdrawal** from Albania’s borders.
12. Thorough **preparation** of the specimen sections is the **responsibility** of laboratory personnel.
13. Any **contradictions** among data in any result requires an **explanation** of the reasons for the **inconsistencies**.
14. The board’s rejection of our proposal was a disappointment but not a surprise because of our expectation that a decision had already been made in regard to a delay of any new initiatives.

15. Their performance of the music was marked by great enthusiasm but lacked historical accuracy.
Revise these sentences. At the end of each is a hint. For example:

Congress's reduction of the deficit resulted in the decline of interest rates.
[because]

Interest rates declined because Congress reduced the deficit.

1. The use of models of good prose in teaching prose style does not invariably result in improvements of clarity and directness in the writing of students.

[Although teachers have used . . .]

2. Precision in plotting the location of fragments of a vase or other object enhances the possibility of its accurate reconstruction.

[When you precisely . . .]

3. Any departures by the staff from the established procedures may cause delays and even termination of the experiment.

[If the staff . . .]

4. A student's lack of socialization into a field may lead to writing problems because of her insufficient knowledge about the construction of arguments by professionals in that field.

[When . . ., . . ., because . . .]

5. The successful implementation of a new curriculum depends on the cooperation of faculty with students in setting achievable goals within a reasonable time.

[In order to . . ., . . .]

6. Our evaluation of the outcomes of the programs placed emphasis on objective measures despite our recognition of the low level of rater agreement.

[When . . ., . . ., even though . . .]