

## **Crime Alert! Robbing Verbs Lowers Results**

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Have you noticed a subtle wave of crime around you? People are persistently robbing their verbs. You might be a perpetrator yourself, making your messages longer, duller, and less likely to keep people's attention.

To rob a verb is to use it in a way that strips it of things that rightfully belong to verbs: clarity, conciseness, and power.

Most people who commit this crime do so inadvertently, usually in an effort to sound impressive. They do it by using a form of the weak verb *to be* (is, was, will be, has been, etc.) and then turning a stronger verb into a noun. Here's an example:

*Our establishment has undertaken the deliverance of alternatives to enhance the effectiveness of your regularly scheduled task management.*

This 18-word sentence is neither clear, nor concise, nor powerful. Develop a string of sentences like this, and you'll get a needlessly long document that no one wants to read. As it stands, the verb in the example—*has undertaken*—is dull and powerless. The author robbed a strong verb when he or she turned the action word *deliver* into the noun *deliverance*. Let's undo the damage:

*Our company delivers services to make each day easier for you.*

Making the point directly and putting the power back into the strong verb gave us a clear, dynamic sentence that is approximately 40% shorter than the original. This is writing that catches the reader's attention. This is writing the reader is willing to stick with until the end. This is a crime undone!

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