

Lesson Plan: Nominalization in academic writing

Level	Advanced (C1–C2)
Time	60–90 minutes
Skills	Grammar, writing
Focus	Converting verbs and adjectives into nouns for formal written English

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand what nominalization is and why it is used in formal writing
- Convert verbs and adjectives into noun forms correctly
- Use nominalization to increase the formality and density of written English
- Recognise and avoid overuse of nominalization which obscures meaning

TARGET LANGUAGE (EXAMPLES)

Verb → noun

- analyse → analysis
- develop → development
- achieve → achievement
- fail → failure
- investigate → investigation
- conclude → conclusion

Adjective → noun

- accurate → accuracy
- stable → stability
- significant → significance
- diverse → diversity

Effect in writing

- Informal: We investigated the causes.
- Nominalised: The investigation of the causes was conducted.
- Informal: Scientists discovered a new element.
- Nominalised: The discovery of a new element was announced.

When NOT to overuse

- Over-nominalised: The achievement of an improvement in the situation requires...
- Clearer: To improve the situation, we need to...
- Balance: nominalise deliberately, not by default.

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up (10 min)

Task: Students rate two versions of a paragraph: which sounds more academic?

- Identify the nominalized forms in the academic version.

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: Common noun suffixes: -tion/-sion, -ment, -ance/-ence, -ity, -ness, -al.

- Show how nominalization shifts verbs into subjects/objects, increasing density.
- Discuss: when is nominalization useful and when does it obscure meaning?

3. Guided practice (10 min)

Task: Rewrite informal sentences using nominalization.

- 'The economy improved significantly.' → 'There was a significant improvement in the economy.'
- 'Scientists have failed to explain this.' → 'The failure of scientists to explain this...'

4. Writing task (25 min)

Task: Write a formal abstract (100 words) on a topic of their choice.

- Must include at least 6 nominalized forms.
- Compare with a partner: is the register consistent?

5. Editing task (10 min)

Task: Identify 5 over-nominalized sentences. Rewrite for clarity.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one:

1. Rewrite 6 informal sentences as formal academic sentences using nominalization.
2. Write an abstract for a real or imaginary research paper using nominalization throughout.
3. Find 8 nominalizations in an academic article and write the verb/adjective form of each.