§ 14. Turn *-ion* words into verbs when you can.

It's not just passive voice (§ 8) and *be*-verbs (§ 13) that can sap the strength of your sentences. So can abstract nouns. Avoid using words ending in *-ion* to describe what people do. Write that someone has violated the law, not that someone *was in violation of* the law; that something illustrates something else, not that it *provides an illustration of* it; that a lawyer has decided to represent the defendant, not that the lawyer has *made the decision* to *undertake the representation of* the defendant; that one party will indemnify the other, not that the party will *furnish an indemnification to* the other.

In each of those alternatives, there's the long way of saying it and there's the short way. The long way uses weak verbs and abstract nouns ending in *-ion*. The short way uses a single forthright verb. Legal writing is full of flabby wordings stemming from *-ion* words:

Wordy	Better Wording
are in mitigation of	mitigate
conduct an examination of	examiné
make accommodation for	accommodate
make provision for	provide for
provide a description of	describe
submit an application	apply
take into consideration	consider

Of course, when you need to refer to mediation or negotiation as a procedure, then you must say *mediation* or *negotiation*. But if a first draft refers to *the mediation of the claims by the parties*, you might well consider having the second draft refer to *the parties' mediating the claims*.

Why concentrate on editing *-ion* words? Three reasons:

- You'll generally eliminate prepositions in the process, especially *of* (see § 15).
- You'll often avoid inert *be*-verbs by replacing them with action verbs (see § 13).
- You'll humanize the text by saying who does what.

The underlying rationale in all this is concreteness. By uncovering buried verbs, you make your writing much less abstract—it becomes much easier for readers to visualize what you're talking about.

If you still have doubts, compare that last sentence with this one: "After the transformation of nominalizations, the text will have fewer abstractions; readers' capability for visualization of the discussion is enhanced."

Be alert to words ending in *-ion*. When you can, edit them out.