Circuit Bending Writing Assignment

Background

In keeping with the plan to focus on different genres and writing techniques, this writing assignment asks you to write a response essay and to focus on excluding nominalizations from your writing.

Response Essays

A response essay is generally intended to provide a better understanding of how you feel about a particular topic. As such, when you write a response essay, you discuss your personal thoughts and feelings on a topic. You also typically write in the first person, which means you use the word “I” a lot.

Because your essay will focus on your reaction to something (e.g., saying if you agree or disagree with a topic or whether you like or dislike something), it is important to summarize your reaction in a thesis statement. Your thesis statement, asserting your point of view, should appear in the introductory paragraph of your essay. The rest of your response essay serves to support your thesis.

Although your thesis expresses your point of view and therefore is your opinion, you need to use facts or observations to support that opinion. For example, if you are writing a response to something you have read, you might say something like “The story was very confusing because the author used too many words that were unfamiliar to me and she changed the point of view too often.” Although someone else may not have had a problem with the words or with keeping up with the changes in point of view, it is a fact that you did not know many of the words and that the author did make frequent changes in the point of view of the story. In the body of your essay, you need to support your thesis by identifying the wording and point-of-view transitions that you found confusing and explaining why they were confusing.

After supporting your thesis statement with the body of your essay, you need to write a conclusion. The conclusion summarizes what you have said with respect to your thesis.

Here is an example of a response essay. Although the topic of the essay is unlike the one you will be asked to write, the essay demonstrates appropriate structure.

Nominalizations

(Taken from “Painless Writing” by Jeffery Strausser)
A *nominalization* is a noun derived from a verb or an adjective. Examples of a noun deriving from a base verb include: seclusion, inference, and confinement. You can spot these verb-based nouns by their suffixes: -ent, -ence, -ant, -ency, -ancy, -ment, -tion, -sion. Similarly, adjective-based nouns derive from a base adjective. Adding suffixes – ent, -ant, -ful, -able converts adjectives into nominalizations. Below are some common nominalizations created from verb and adjective bases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Nominalization</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Nominalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>move</td>
<td>movement</td>
<td>thoughtful</td>
<td>thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excited</td>
<td>excitement</td>
<td>difficult</td>
<td>difficulty</td>
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<td>withdraw</td>
<td>withdrawal</td>
<td>opulent</td>
<td>opulence</td>
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<tr>
<td>fail</td>
<td>failure</td>
<td>applicable</td>
<td>applicability</td>
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<tr>
<td>accept</td>
<td>acceptance</td>
<td>elastic</td>
<td>elasticity</td>
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</tbody>
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So what’s wrong with nominalizations; they certainly appear often in text? Overuse of nominalizations makes your writing boring and stiff. Crisp and interesting writing demands well-placed verbs and adjectives, not an over-abundance of nouns that can’t convey action or describe themselves. Here are some (admittedly simple) examples:

Nominalization: Bob made a withdrawal of money from his bank account.
Without Nominalization: Bob withdrew money from his bank account.

Nominalization: You can make an application of the techniques to your writing.
Without Nominalization: You can apply these techniques to your writing.

Nominalization: The rubber band has a lot of elasticity.
Without Nominalization: The rubber band is very elastic.

In this assignment, you are asked to pay particular attention to nominalizations and minimize their use in your writing.

**The Writing Prompt**

For the past couple of weeks, we have been working on *circuit bending* in class. Circuit bending as a creative art form has enjoyed increasing attention recently, but it’s not a new endeavor. Reed Ghazala is credited as being its originator, and, as is true of many artists, Mr. Ghazala states that he “felt compelled to pursue circuit bending.” Please read Mr Ghazala’s account of his life and circuit bending in the attached article. In that article, Mr Ghazala shares many feels and thoughts that might be considered controversial. For example, he suggests that, “Circuit-bending, seen as art, was inevitable,” and that some circuit-bent instruments are "living instruments." He also describes his path as one that was not fostered by our educational system, but was instead driven by personal exploration.

In this writing assignment, you are to present your opinion of Mr. Ghazala’s article in a one to two page response essay. Is Mr Ghazala’s life and art relevant to you? What
aspects of Mr Ghazala’s article are consistent with your own life experiences (including circuit bending), and which aspects, if any, do you feel are suspect or perhaps “dated.”

As stated above, a response essay requires a thesis statement, which is introduced in the first paragraph. The remainder of your essay provides support for your thesis, and your conclusion summarizes your position. Also remember that you are writing in the active voice and minimizing the use of nominalizations.

Your essay should be double spaced and written in 12 pt font. And last but not least, proof read your essay a day after you have written it.

**Due Date**

Your essay should be submitted electronically to Moodle. It may be in any one of five file formats: Microsoft Word 2007 or earlier, Open Office (.odt), PDF, RTF, or plain text (.txt). **Your essay is due no later than Friday, Oct 8, at mid-night.**

**Grading**

To get a C+ or higher your essay must meet the following criteria:

1. The response essay has a thesis statement and that statement is made in the opening paragraph.
2. The essay responds to the writing prompt.
3. The essay is written in the active voice with a minimum of nominalizations.
4. All sentences are complete sentences.
5. The paper is free from basic grammatical errors.

To get a B or an A your essay must meet the following additional requirements:

1. The essay responds to the prompt in a complete and interesting way. The opinions presented are appropriately complex and well defended.
2. It is a well organized essay with an introduction, development and conclusion. All of the details relate to the thesis that you are defending.
3. Every paragraph contains a clear topic sentence or there is another kind of organization principle at work.
4. The writing style is interesting and efficient, not wordy or unclear.
5. It is a thoughtful and original paper.
6. I hear a lively, intelligent, and interesting human speaking through the text of the essay.