

# 78 Other text features



Since the early eighteenth century literary critics and academics have queried whether Shakespeare wrote all of the works attributed to him, or indeed, whether Shakespeare was in fact just one person. This controversy still continues today.

## 1 Nominalisation

It is sometimes more concise and elegant, especially in written English, to use noun phrases rather than verb phrases to express an idea, as this can combine two sentences into one:

VERB PHRASE **The committee decided** to open the playground to all children. This was welcomed by the local schools.

NOUN PHRASE **The committee's decision** to open the playground to all children was welcomed by the local schools.

The noun phrase is often made up of two nouns linked by a preposition:

VERB PHRASE	NOUN PHRASE
<i>They released the video in 1998.</i>	<i>The release of the video in 1998 ...</i>
<i>The law was amended last week.</i>	<i>The amendment to the law last week ...</i>
<i>The war drained the country's resources.</i>	<i>The war was a drain on the country's resources.</i>

An adverb in a verb phrase changes to an adjective if the verb is nominalised:

*The girl shouted **loudly** and attracted the attention she wanted.*

*The girl's **loud** shouts attracted the attention she wanted.*

We can use nominalisation to summarise information from a previous sentence.

This is useful for developing an explanation or argument:

*The rioters threw petrol bombs at the embassy. **The situation** was getting out of hand.*

*The judges have considered at great length the six novels in the shortlist, and we have reached agreement. **Our decision** is unanimous. This year's prize goes to ...*

We can often use *have + noun* to combine information about an event into one sentence rather than two:

*They raced up the hill. The race was exhausting. → They **had an** exhausting race up the hill.*

## 2 Using parallel structures

Although we try to avoid repeating words when we are writing a text, a useful way of making a text cohesive is to use similar grammar in different sentences, for example, using the same verb form, similar word order or repeating a particular grammatical form:

***She is probably going to fail the exam. And she is probably going to blame her teacher.***

*Your own home. **To live and sleep in. To cook and eat in. To watch TV or maybe do some work in.***



We avoid sudden changes in grammar as this often looks clumsy and unclear:

*[I can't wait to lie on the sand. Swimming in the sea is great. To sunbathe is something I would love to do as well.]*

✓ *I can't wait to be **lying** on the sand, **sunbathing** and **swimming** in the sea.*

If we want to create a dramatic effect or make a strong contrast, we can repeat an unusual grammatical pattern. But we usually only use this device in narrative and fiction; in less literary contexts it can seem inappropriate:

***Rarely had I** seen such a ramshackle boat. And **never had I** actually been expected to board one.*

Repetition, particularly in sets of three, is a common rhetorical device, i.e. used in giving speeches. We call this 'tripling':

***America, at its best**, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. ... **America, at its best**, is also courageous. ... **America, at its best**, is compassionate.*

(Barack Obama, inaugural address, 2009)