

## Software: A collective noun

1. CRM software [make / makes] it easy for companies to store and access customer data.

(Single Choice)

- make
- makes

### What?

Whether you are referring to one single software or multiple, always treat software as a singular noun for subject-verb agreement.

### Why?

- There is no plural form of *software*.
- *Software* is a collective noun, meaning it is a noun that denotes a group of individuals.
- Other examples of collective nouns include *family*, *staff*, *crew*, and *team*.

Software vs. System	
Software (Singular)	System (Singular)
HubSpot's CRM <b>software is</b> revolutionary.	HubSpot's CRM <b>system is</b> revolutionary.
Software (Plural)	System (Plural)
CRM <b>software is</b> a critical tool for marketers.	CRM <b>systems are</b> a critical tool for marketers.

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## Questions in titles

2. Choose the title that is formatted correctly: (Single Choice)

What Is ERP and How It Improves Internal Processes

What Is ERP? How It Improves Internal Processes

What Is ERP and How It Improves Internal Processes?

### What?

Titles are not exempt from grammar rules. We need to make sure questions are followed by question marks.

### Why?

- *What is* or *How is* phrases are questions.
- *How it* or *What it* phrases are statements, not questions.

### How to identify questions in titles:

Break your title up into parts and identify where (or if) it needs a question mark.

<b>What Is Social Listening and How to Act on What You Hear</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Not a question</b>
<b>What Is Social Listening? How to Act on What You Hear</b>	

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## Passive voice

3. Which sentence is written in passive voice? (Single Choice)

- Marketers prefer using Zoom as their video conferencing platform.
- Asana, a project management software, helps you track projects and prioritize work.
- Expense management software is used by companies to track and manage employee spending.

### What?

Active voice means that a sentence has a subject that acts upon its verb. Passive voice means that a subject is a recipient of a verb's action.

- **Subject:** The person or thing that performs an action
- **Verb:** The action being performed
- **Direct object:** The person or thing receiving the action

### Why?

The subject of this sentence is *companies*. However, the subject appears after both the verb (*used*) and direct object (*expense management software*).

### How to spot the passive voice:

- The subject/action doer comes after the verb. In most cases, this is identified by a **verb + by**.
- There is no subject/action doer in the sentence

### How to fix the passive voice:

- Put the subject first
- Make sure you can always answer the question, "Who or what did this action?"

**Expense management software is used by companies to track and manage employee spending.**

Direct object

Verb

Subject

**Companies use expense management software to track and manage employee spending.**

**Meeting note:** Saba and I want to reiterate that using passive voice is not bad or grammatically incorrect.

As stated above, passive sentences often state the direct object *first*, which can cause confusion about what the subject is and distract from the point.

There are, however, times when using passive voice makes sense:

- When the subject is truly unknown or is obvious/implied.
  - Glossary pages often use passive voice construction because the subject (businesses and companies) is inherently obvious.
- When you want to focus on the person/thing (direct object) affected by the action (verb).

Take a look at this site for more info on when passive voice is OK:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/learnit/learnitv65.shtml>

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## Active voice

4. Which sentence is written in active voice? (Single Choice)

Zoom is considered the most popular video conferencing platform by marketers.

Asana is used to organize and prioritize projects.

According to G2, NetSuite is the number one ERP system.

## What?

Active voice means that a sentence has a subject that acts upon its verb. Passive voice means that a subject is a recipient of a verb's action.

- **Subject:** The person or thing that performs an action
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- **Direct object:** The person or thing receiving the action

## Why?

<b>Zoom is considered the most popular video conferencing platform by marketers.</b>		
Direct object	Verb	Subject

What is being considered?	What action is happening?	Who considers it?
<b>Asana is used to organize and prioritize projects.</b>		
Direct object	Verb	Subject – <b>MISSING!</b>
What is being used?	What action is happening?	Who uses it?
<b>According to G2, NetSuite is the number one ERP system.</b>		
Subject	Verb	Direct object
What is?	What action is happening?	What is it doing?

**Meeting note:** The second answer to this quiz question is a perfect example of the *appropriate* use of passive voice.

- **Asana is used to organize and prioritize projects.**

Even though we are missing a subject in this sentence, it is inherently clear *who* the subject is. We know that anyone can use Asana to organize and prioritize projects. In the context of the writing, the reader would be able to understand this point.

*When deadlines are missed and projects fall through the cracks, team leaders turn to project management software for help. Although there are many cloud-based project management tools on the market, Asana is the most favorable option among marketing leaders. **Asana is used to organize and prioritize projects.** The app can also store files and documents, track team goals, and provide real-time data on projects.*

Here, our subjects (leaders/marketing leaders) have already been established. Therefore, we do not need to reiterate it.

Tips for knowing when passive voice is OK:

- **Make sure the subject is clear.** Read the sentences before and after and ask yourself, “Is it 100% obvious who or what my subject is?” If so, then a passive sentence is fine.
  - **Know what the focus is.** Say, for example, you’re writing a section called “Project management software vs. expense management software”. In this case, you may find yourself constructing passive sentences in order to bring the reader’s focus and attention to the direct object (AKA the software) rather than the subject (AKA the user).
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## Simple present tense

5. Which sentence is written in simple present tense? (Single Choice)

- Google is changing its algorithm up to 600 times this year.
- Google changed its algorithm 600 times last year.
- Google changes its algorithm up to 600 times per year.

### What?

The simple present tense is used to talk about things that we do all the time.

### Why?

Simple present tense describes habits, unchanging situations, general truths, and fixed arrangements. We use the simple present tense when an action happens regularly or is happening right now.

<b>Google is <b>changing</b> its algorithm up to 600 times this year.</b>		
	Present continuous (-ing verbs)	
<i>Present continuous: an action or condition is happening now, frequently, and may continue into the future.</i>		
<b>Google <b>changed</b> its algorithm 600 times last year.</b>		
	Simple past (sometimes -ed verbs)	
<i>Simple past: describes events in the past</i>		
<b>Google <b>changes</b> its algorithm up to 600 times per year.</b>		
	Simple present	
<i>Simple present: habitual actions or occurrences</i>		

**Meeting note:** Lately we've seen some instances of present continuous used interchangeably with simple present. Generally speaking, when we are discussing uses or applications of software or general processes, we want to use the simple present tense.

- **Companies offering tuition reimbursement have a better chance of reducing employee turnover.**
  - This sentence is in *present continuous*.
  - We are saying that companies that are offering tuition reimbursement *right now at this moment* have a better chance of reducing turnover.
  - However, this is limiting, as we are implying that *only* companies doing it right now will receive this benefit.
- **Companies that offer tuition reimbursement have a better chance of reducing employee turnover.**
  - This sentence is in *simple present*.
  - We are saying that generally speaking, based on what we know, companies that offer this have a better chance of reducing turnover.
  - This makes more sense and is all-encompassing to the general truth we are trying to convey.

These sentences have subtle differences, but it's important to know exactly how you want to convey information to the reader and ensure your point is clear.

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## Nominalization

6. Identify the nominalization: "HubSpot is an all-in-one CRM and marketing automation platform. The integration of HubSpot with other valuable marketing tools makes it easy to promote pipeline and optimize campaigns." (Single Choice)

- is an all-in-one CRM
- the integration of HubSpot
- makes it easy to

### What?

Nominalizations are nouns that are created from adjectives (words that describe nouns) or verbs (action words). Nominalizations are nouns that refer to a process.

### Why?

Avoid using nominalizations by rewriting the sentence using the verb of the same meaning:

1. Identify the noun phrase
2. Identify the verb equivalent
3. Conjugate the verb and replace the noun phrase

Common nominalizations	
VERB	NOUN
evaporate	evaporation
optimize	optimization
interfere	interference
evolve	evolution
<a href="#">See more common nominalizations here</a>	

**Meeting note:** This is another instance of “trusting your gut”. Sometimes we use nominalizations because we want the reader to focus on a particular point we are trying to make.

Nominalizations are not bad or incorrect, but we don’t want to use too many of them. Overusing nominalizations makes writing wordy and often unclear.

*Small companies with limited resources often put a lot of pressure on their employees to get things done. While an individual may have been hired as a digital marketer, they’ll often find themselves responsible for sales and PR tasks in addition to their regular work. Not only can this negatively impact the employee’s work performance, but it can also affect their mental health. **The feeling of burnout** is a common side effect of overworked employees.*

Here, we establish two main consequences of overworking: work performance and mental health. If we want the reader to truly focus on how this will affect one’s mental health (AKA feelings and emotions), then it makes sense to use a nominalization to call out that point. Instead of saying “Overworked employees often experience burnout”, we are drawing more attention to the actual *feeling*.

Again, there is no “rule” to this! Trust your instincts. And if you find yourself using nominalizations a lot, then go back and see where it may be appropriate to reconstruct the sentence and get rid of them.