depends on whether the writer wishes to stress the *type of intellectual activity* that the expert engaged in, or the *strength and positive value* with which the authority expresses his viewpoint, or *the faith (or lack thereof)* that the writer has in the expert's quote" (O'Neill). Consider the variety of options for attributive verbs in academic writing from O'Neill's verb lists below.

TABLE 3.1 Attributive Verbs by Strength

FAIRLY NEUTRAL

advances	discusses	proposes
adds	evaluates	presents
analyzes	explains	puts it/puts forward
asks	focuses	relates
comments	finds	remarks
compares	illustrates	reports
concludes	indicates	responds
depicts	investigates	reveals
describes	notes	says
defines	observes	sees
develops	points out	writes

BOLDER

affirms	demonstrates	mocks
argues	denies	predicts
articulates	denigrates	questions
asserts	denounces	reasons
attacks	derides	reminds
believes	disputes	shows
confirms	emphasizes	states
counteracts	establishes	stresses
criticizes	expounds	supports
condemns	insists	urges
declares	maintains	

WEAKER

appears (to believe, to think)	implies	perceives, seems to (believe, think)
assumes	infers	speculates
claims	intimates	suggests
considers	insinuates	supposes
	interprets	

POSITIVE

agrees	confirms	recommends
advocates	corroborates	reminds
attests	demonstrates	supports
champions	emphasizes	urges
celebrates	endorses	validates
condones	opts for	verifies

NEGATIVE

accuses	derides	mocks
complains	denounces	questions
condemns	disagrees	takes issue
critiques	disowns	with/warns
denigrates	disputes	
deplores	laments	

TABLE 3.3 In a debate, the scholar may either . . .

CONCEDE

acquiesce	allow	confess
admit	concede	compromise
acknowledge	defer (to someone)	recognize
agree	grant	

REFUSE TO CONCEDE

contend	dispute	refute
contradict	denounce	reject
deny	insist	respond
disagree	maintain	retort
discredit	question	take issue
disprove	refuse	

Having examined a problem, scholars often include warnings about the gravity/seriousness of the situation and recommend possible solutions, as in the following verbs.

TABLE 3.4

	WARN	
adjure	criticize	remind
admonish	denounce	reprimand
caution	decry	sanction
censure	fear	suspect
condemn	foresee	warn
	RECOMMEND	
advise	encourage	propose
advocate	endorse	recommend
champion	exhort	support
commend	favour	uphold
counsel	promote	urge

Final Thoughts on Strong Verbs

Now that you've got dead verbs on the brain, try to put the topic aside when you write your rough drafts. As we suggested in Chapter 1, it's best to freewrite without the burden of The Judge reminding you of wordiness, dead verbs, and so on.

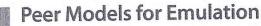Revise for dead verbs only when the piece is done—that is, the major parts sit in proper order. Applied to a well-constructed story, essay, or research paper, verb revisions tighten up writing and emphasize actions that engage the senses in the reader. If you notice a lot of dead verbs during the revision process, transform them into concrete verbs as often as you can.

> I'm not a very good writer, but I'm an excellent rewriter.
> —JAMES MICHENER

EXERCISE 16 ▶ My Dead Verbs

Editing other people's writing for dead verbs is often easier than editing our own. To help you see your own writing objectively, this exercise requires you to find dead verbs in your previous assignments. Print a copy of the work you did for Assignment 1 or 2. Circle all the forms of the dead verb *to be*.

Peer Models for Emulation

Appendix: Verbs

Note: Verbs in the tables are listed from most frequent to less frequent.

Table A.1. Top 100 Verbs in the Present Simple Tense (Active Voice) in Academic Writing[1]				
be	give	reflect	tell	report
have	indicate	refer	believe	emphasize
do	involve	point	look	ask
say	continue	write	bring	examine
seem	go	explain	support	raise
provide	use	serve	happen	put
make	follow	lie	turn	leave
suggest	offer	reveal	claim	feel
appear	occur	consist	add	speak
become	exist	want	get	cause
require	describe	see	demonstrate	set
show	lead	increase	seek	move
remain	call	find	tend	cost
include	contain	help	stand	enable
mean	state	hold	produce	define
come	begin	note	play	relate
take	argue	know	affect	address
need	present	create	constitute	apply
allow	work	focus	illustrate	fail
represent	depend	imply	concern	run

Adapted from data in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2011).

Table A.2. Top 100 Verbs in the Past Simple Tense (Active Voice) in Academic Writing (irregular past simple forms in parentheses)

be (was/were)	see (saw)	involve	choose (chose)	meet (met)
have (had)	ask	need	mean (meant)	increase
do (did)	seem	lead (led)	fail	represent
say (said)	want	seek (sought)	try (tried)	establish
find (found)	appear	start	grow (grew)	consider
become (became)	know (knew)	argue	examine	fall (fell)
make (made)	occur	work	allow	speak (spoke)
begin (began)	reveal	get (got)	serve	spend (spent)
come (came)	think (thought)	create	present	claim
report	continue	develop	learn	express
take (took)	note	bring (brought)	follow	conduct
include	remain	emerge	live	put (put)
use	provide	explain	complete	add
show	tell (told)	help	demonstrate	tend
write (wrote)	suggest	turn	participate	support
indicate	believe	conclude	observe	discover
go (went)	leave (left)	produce	agree	set (set)
receive	hold (held)	offer	perceive	experience
give (gave)	describe	call	play	publish
feel (felt)	state	decide	die	happen

Adapted from data in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2011).

make (made)	work	bring (brought)	point	decline
come (come)	suggest	produce	hear (heard)	suffer
show	focus	say (said)	know (known)	limit
take (taken)	create	call	pass	study
find (found)	grow (grown)	move	spend (spent)	put (put)
see (seen)	experience	play	complete	hold
do (done)	result	examine	turn	set (set)
lead (led)	write (written)	identify	live	read (read)
develop	fail	establish	allow	teach (taught)
receive	demonstrate	reach	adopt	rise (risen)
begin (begun)	prove (proven/proved)*	happen	undergo (undergone)	improve
change	lose (lost)	evolve	achieve	publish
increase	contribute	continue	describe	enter
use	serve	choose (chosen)	gain	acquire
give (given)	help	cause	observe	meet (met)
go (gone)	leave (left)	fall (fallen)	tend	decide
argue	emerge	report	appear	propose

* *proven* is slightly more common than *proved* in COCA, but the difference in frequency is minimal.
+ *gotten* is more than twice as frequent as *got* in COCA. In British English, only *got* is acceptable.

Adapted from data in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2011).

Table A.4. The Most Common Passive Verbs in Academic Writing			
made	seen	found	considered
given	used	done	shown

Table A.5. Other Common Verbs Used in the Passive Voice in Academic Writing (in alphabetical order)				
achieved	coupled (with)	extracted	linked (to/with)	reported
aligned (with)	deemed	flattened	located (at/in)	represented
applied	defined	formed	lost	required
approved	derived	given	measured	said
asked	described	grouped (with/by)	needed	situated
associated (with)	designed	held	noted	stored
attributed (to)	determined	identified	observed	studied
based (on)	discussed	illustrated	obtained	subjected (to)
born	distributed	inclined	performed	thought
brought	documented	intended	plotted	told
calculated	drawn	introduced	positioned	transferred
called	entitled (to)	involved	prepared	treated
carried	estimated	kept	presented	understood
chosen	examined	known	recognized	viewed
classified (as)	expected	labeled	regarded	
compared (to/with)	explained	left	related (to)	
composed (of)	expressed	limited (to)	replaced	

Based on Hinkel, 2004, pp. 166–167.