## Worksheet 11: Verbs, Nouns, Adjectives and Other Modifiers

**Corresponding Readings**: Chapter 15 (pages 394-396) in *The Copyeditor's Handbook* and Donald Hall's "Verbs and Modifiers" located on our schedule.

**Key Concepts:** Passive Voice; Invisible Verbs; False Color in Verbs; Fancy Verbs; The Adjective and the Cliché; Nouns as Modifiers

## **Assignment:**

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1. Underline the weak verbs (verb-noun or verb-adjective or verb-participle combinations, invisible verbs, verbs lacking particularity) in these sentences. See if you can substitute strong verbs for those underlined. When you make a substitution, does the meaning of the sentence vary? Can you think of reasons for preferring the weaker verb combinations in any of the sentences?
a. She made the observation that German had been her minor in college.
b. We have endeavored to reach a conclusion that will be satisfactory.
c. We were just starting to sing when the door opened.
d. The committee has been meeting everyday for a month.
e. I am trying to be healthy so that I will be playing tennis when I have arrived at eighty.
f. A different way of expressing the same idea is that having no commitment to activity we are engaged upon a course of activity lacking purpose.

2. These five sentences contain passives. Underline the passive verbs, and then consider if any are necessary or useful. When the passive is objectionable, figure out why, and revise the sentence so that passive becomes active.
a. Arabella was understood by her neighbors to have cornered the market in soybean futures.
b. People committed to excellence are sought after in the business community.
c. At the picketing sites on North Campus, GEO members were not allowed to use the restrooms.
d. My canoe tipped over, I was thrown out into the water, and I saw the MacDonalds ahead of me.
e. Remembering August with Emily in Poughkeepsie, and rereading her letter which arrived this morning, I gradually realized that I had been deceived.
3. Using different colors of pen, underline words in the Agee passage from your reading: i.e. verbs in red, nouns in blue, modifiers in green. Notice how the parts of speech work together. Notice how the metaphors and other comparisons contain all parts of speech.