Strong vs. Weak Verbs

Would you rather your writing be dull and boring or strong and vibrant?

Weak verbs don’t show action and are considered boring. There are 4 types of weak verb expressions:

- **“State of being” verbs are considered weak.**
  - These include: is, are, was, were, has, have, had, will be, have been, has been, had been, could have been, should have been, would have been
  - Substitute these words with an action word (see reverse side for a list of common action words).
    Weak: Jamie *is* taking a class on Tuesday evenings.
    Strong: Jamie *takes* a class on Tuesday evenings.

- **Vague expressions**
  - Vague expressions often plague sentences, especially when we start sentences with one of these:
    ▪ It is / It was / It will be
    ▪ There is / There are
    ▪ There was / There were
    ▪ There will be / There could be
  - Ask yourself, “what is, where is, where will be, etc.” Your answer to this question is what you should lead with.
    Weak/Vague: *It is* true that Jimmy wishes he could play the xylophone. (What is true?)
    Strong: Jimmy *wishes* he could play the xylophone.

- **The infinitive “To be”** (an infinitive is “to” plus the simple form of a verb)
  - When unnecessary to the meaning, remove it from the sentence.
    Weak: After a little practice, many students find writing to be fun.
    Strong: After a little practice, many students find writing fun.

- **Adjective clauses**
  - Verb phrases beginning with “who,” “which,” or “that.”
  - These verb expressions make your writing too wordy.
  - They can usually just be eliminated from the sentence.
    Weak: Students *who are in my class* should prepare for tomorrow’s presentation.
    Strong: Students *in my class* should prepare for tomorrow’s presentation.
Strong Verb Examples

accelerated  composed  exchanged  led  publicized  shaped
achieved  conceptualized  expanded  located  published  shortened
acquired  condensed  expedited  maintained  purchased  simplified
activated  concluded  explained  managed  pursued  sold
adapted  conducted  exposed  marketed  qualified  solved
adopted  consolidated  extended  maximized  quantified  sparrowed
advanced  consulted  facilitated  measured  quoted  specified
advertised  contracted  financed  mediated  raised  spoke
advised  contributed  focused  mentored  rated  stabilized
aided  controlled  forecasted  met  recommended  staffed
allocated  convinced  formed  minimized  recovered  streamlined
altered  coordinated  furnished  modernized  strengthened  structured
analyzed  corrected  gained  motivated  reduced  suggested
answered  created  gathered  negotiated  regulated  summarized
anticipated  critiqued  gave  nurtured  reinforced  supplied
applied  cultivated  generated  obtained  regained  supported
appointed  cut  granted  offered  rejected  surpassed
approved  debugged  handled  opened  remedied  surveyed
arranged  decentralized  guided  operated  remodeled  synchronized
audited  convinced  founded  orchestrated  renewed  synthesized
author  designed  implemented  organized  reorganized  tailored
authorized  determined  improved  outlined  repaired  targeted
automated  developed  increased  overseen  replaced  taught
balanced  devised  influenced  paid  represented  terminated
bargained  directed  informed  performed  requested  tested
bought  discovered  inspected  persuaded  researched  tightened
broadened  built  distributed  installed  resolved  traded
centralized  doubled  instituted  planned  restored  trained
chaired  drafted  instructed  positioned  revamped  transmitted
championed  earned  integrated  prepared  reviewed  traveled
changed  edited  interpreted  presented  revised  tripled
charted  eliminated  interviewed  presided  revitalized  united
chose  employed  introduced  prevented  rewarded  updated
clarified  enabled  invented  priced  saved  utilized
classified  encouraged  invested  prioritized  validated
cleared  enforced  investigated  processed  verified
closed  engaged  invited  produced  viewed
collaborated  engineer  isolated  secured  vitalize
collected  enhanced  issued  selected  widened
combined  enlarged  joined  sent  witnessed
compared  enlisted  judged  served  won
compiled  established  launched  proposed  write
completed  evaluated  lectured  proved  wrote