

This kibbitzer is based on a sentence from a draft conference paper by a Japanese electrical engineer. His topic at this point is the requirements for an effective Fault Current Limiter (FCL). The revision went through two stages:

Original	Revisions
Requirement (b) can be improved by reducing the leakage impedance ...	<p>1. The performance of the FCL can be improved with respect to requirement (b) by reducing the leakage impedance ...</p> <p>2. Requirement (b) can be met by reducing the leakage impedance ...</p>

We soon agreed that it was not the requirement which can be improved, but the FCL, or, rather the performance of the FCL. A concordance (top 10 items only) illustrates the close collocational link between **improve** and **performance**, and justifies revision 1:

1 ed where, and how far, the company needed to improve its performance to achieve superiority. T
2 year-long study of how British companies can improve their international performance. It has
3 ntial. 'People often do want feedback and to improve performance. They have training needs and
4 nd Lord Archer accepted the Government could improve its performance, and there were appeals f
5 ts high street newsagency chain, in order to improve performance and increase customer service
6 de clear that Britain was considering how to improve the performance of its 2,300-strong Unpro
7 Government to back it with a real effort to improve industry's performance. >Mr Heseltine mad
8 ould be happier for Spring Ram executives to improve the performance of the businesses they ha
9 business. "We are taking these actions to improve our operating performance, accelerate the
10 cities would also appoint "facilitators" to improve GPs' performance. A new post would be cre

For the noun **requirement**, an appropriate verb is **meet**, as in the following citations, and also in revision 2:

1 ining for executive development, designed to meet members' requirements. Each organisation has
2 dend, if the movement is to stay healthy and meet statutory requirements,' says the annual rep
3 : "The university are doing all they can to meet our requirements. We'll check it out again a
4 as four draft contracts to cover itself and meet Venables's potential requirements. Kelly, wh
5 n how Europol should be extended in order to meet the requirements of crime suppression," he s
6 unding for the smaller company which may not meet the requirements of the formal venture capit
7 to ITV. .The question now is, can Channel 4 meet its legal requirement to be distinctive in s
8 titles to a school on the grounds that they meet the requirements of the National Curriculum,
9 interest lies in a gradual supply of arms to meet Iraqi requirements,' ' one minute to Macmilla
10 ead of state, but was unable or unwilling to meet his requirements for accepting the job. By d

At this point the consultant was ready to move on, but the writer of the paper hesitated. What he had been trying to express, he said, was more that by reducing the leakage impedance the FCL could be made to perform in a way that was **better** than that demanded by requirement (b). Only then did the consultant realise that the 'target' expression here was probably the verb **improve on**, which, as a concordance showed, has the meaning of 'doing better than on a previous occasion or better than a particular criterion': exactly the meaning that the writer was trying to convey:

1 the shoemaker can do little to improve on the performance of the human foot. Bruce Tulloh, Ro
2 he recession has helped Mr Kohl improve on the poor poll predictions of last spring. But the k
3 in that title, she will have to improve on her personal best time by nearly 20 minutes, but sh
4 gnition. Apple says Newton will improve on most pen-based computers in that it has three chara
5 e expected the latest effort to improve on last year's promising start. Well, it didn't so the
6 we shall land. Indeed, we often improve on our timetables and get in early," a spokesman said
7 I am sure that Canada will improve on their recent performances under the incentive of th
8 postal deliveries. British Rail improved on some indicators and not on others but still receiv
9 Punto will boost Fiat's hope of improving on the 42,841 new cars it sold in Britain in 1993.(T
10 , then running two qualifies as improving on the minimum standard by 100 per cent.) But for al

That pointed towards two further revisions, both, it appeared, closer to the writer's original intention:

Original	Revisions
Requirement (b) can be improved by reducing the leakage impedance ...	3. Requirement (b) can be improved on by reducing the leakage impedance ..
	4. Requirement (b) can be met or improved on by reducing the leakage impedance ...

Moral: Always check that a suggested revision represents **exactly** what the writer wishes to say ...