

# Proper Word Choice in Writing

You want your reader to see what you are writing about, but you have to create the images with words, not pictures. Be sure to follow the descriptors for word choice when you write.

## USE LANGUAGE THAT IS NATURAL AND NOT OVERDONE

Avoid overusing the thesaurus. Use your own words as much as possible.

## USE SLANG AND CLICHÉS SPARINGLY

In fact, you should avoid them altogether if possible. It is better to use something original than something everyone has heard or even said before.

Ex: It was raining cats and dogs. I was over my head. Don't tempt fate. The show must go on. ETC.

## AVOID REPETITION

Don't use the same **word** or **phrase** or **transition** or **sentence structure** over and over. Find another way to say it.

## USE WORDS and GRAMMAR CORRECTLY

If you aren't sure of a word, look it up. Use not only a thesaurus, but a dictionary. Just because a word is a synonym for another does not mean they are interchangeable, so double check it.

Also, make sure you are using parts of speech and sentence structures correctly. This is especially true with adverbs and adjectives as well as agreement between subjects & verbs and pronouns & antecedents.

## BE CONCISE

If you can figure out a way to say something in fewer words while retaining the same meaning, then do it. The fewer words you use, the more likely you'll keep your reader's attention.

## USE POWERFUL ACTION VERBS

Write sentences that have the subjects doing something. **Avoid linking verbs** such as am, are, is, be, being, and been. Use verbs that create specific images in the reader's mind. If you do this, you will show rather than tell your reader what is happening, you will be able to describe without stopping the action, and you will give more information with fewer words.

To ensure you are using active verbs, find the doer of the action and make it the subject of the sentence.

Example: The car was hit by the tractor. (7 words)

Doer = tractor

Revision: **The tractor hit the car.** (5 words with more precise meaning)

## USE ADJECTIVES THAT ARE AS DESCRIPTIVE AS POSSIBLE

Big, huge, and gigantic all mean the same thing, but gigantic is a better choice if you are describing a tyrannosaurus.

## CREATE A MENTAL PICTURE WITH WORDS FOR THE READER

Choose your words carefully. Look for the best word or phrase to describe what you are writing about. Similes and metaphors are good ways to describe something so your reader can picture it.

Example: They were out of control, running all over the place.

Simile: They had no more direction than a splattered egg.

Example: The candle in the window helped us find our way home in the dark.

Metaphor: The candle was a beacon in the night.

## AVOID VAGUE, BORING, AND OVERUSED WORDS

Try to avoid the following words and phrases whenever possible:

a little bit	boring	of course	stuff
a lot	certainly	particularly	surely
actually	incidentally	phrase	that...
all	interesting	predicament	thing
always	involved with	pretty	too
area	just	problem	totally
as far as...concerned	kind of	somehow	tremendously
aspect	little	something like	very
at least	lots	somewhat	which...
awesome	nice	sort of	whole
big	obviously	specially	