

# Lesson Skill: Developing an essay: Using specific nouns, strong verbs, and vivid adjectives

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## Strand Writing

**SOL** 6.7, 6.8  
7.7, 7.8  
8.7, 8.8  
9.6, 9.7  
10.6, 10.7  
11.6, 11.7  
12.6, 12.7

## Materials

- Highlighters
- Newsprint
- Copies of the three attached handouts

## Lesson

### Nouns

1. Distribute the Using Specific Nouns worksheet. Tell students to highlight the dull nouns and replace them with specific ones. Ask the students to share their replacement nouns with the class.

### Verbs

2. Write the verbs *cry, talk, think, run, walk, play, laugh, yell, eat, watch, dream, see, and sleep* on the board. Ask the students to copy each verb and then write beside it as many strong verbs as they can think of to replace it.
3. Allow students to share their answers with one another in groups of four students each.
4. Distribute the Using Strong Verbs handout, and have students highlight any verbs on the handout that they wrote on their paper.

### Adjectives

5. Write the adjectives *brown, blue, white, purple, gray, black, green, yellow, orange, red, fast, and slow* on the board. Have each student come up with as many synonyms as possible for each adjective and share their answers with their groups. Emphasize that students must think individually and write down a good number of adjectives before sharing their answers.
6. Give each group a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Assign one of the adjectives from step 5 above to each group, and have the group members write all their answers on the newsprint. Post the sheets on the wall to share with the class.

7. Distribute the “Using Vivid Adjectives” handout to the students, and have them compare it to their lists. Have students highlight any adjectives on the handout that they wrote on their newsprint.

**Strategies for Differentiation:**

- Using student samples, identify the form/function of each skill
- Graphic Organizer – Word Wheel to reinforce the quantity of examples given by students
- Review the form of the three (3) parts of speech
- Look for examples of each using stale text (something already used in class)
- Grammar word wall for future exercises – form/function of each
- Use sticky notes to identify and compare dull vs. vivid

## Using Specific Nouns

Dull nouns can be replaced with specific nouns to improve writing.

Example of dull nouns:           The **man next door** likes to eat **beef** for **meals**.

Example of specific nouns:   **Mr. Johnson** likes to eat **sirloin steak** for **dinner**.

Highlight the dull nouns in the sentences below, and write a specific one above it.

1. That little girl likes candy.
2. Alphonso had meat, potatoes, vegetables, and a dessert for a meal yesterday.
3. Ralph put on warm clothing before he went out into the storm.
4. My teacher is reading a book.
5. That teenager is watching a television program on some channel.
6. That animal ran down the street after some man's car.
7. After she won some money, she went downtown to buy some clothes.
8. The ball player did some exercises in a gym.
9. For breakfast, the woman put some fruit on her cereal.
10. Nicole has always wanted to travel to different countries to have breakfast in one country, to have lunch in another country, and dinner in still another one.

## Using Strong Verbs

When you replace a weak verb with a strong one, be sure the replacement works in your sentence and with your meaning. Words have their own shades of meaning and often create a distinct tone. For example, it would not work to replace *cry* with *boohoo* in the following sentence: “She boohooed when she heard the news of her son’s death.” Clearly, a word that creates a more serious tone should be chosen.

| Weak Verb | Strong Verbs   |
|-----------|--|
| cry       | weep, shed tears, sob, blubber, snivel, boohoo, mourn, lament, whimper, wail, howl, groan, bawl, plead, moan   |
| talk      | speak, converse, chat, reply, gossip, consult, confer, discuss, reveal, confess, address, negotiate, lecture, rant, rave, mutter, chatter, utter, prattle, babble, jaw, rattle on                    |
| think     | reflect, consider, ponder, imagine, meditate, picture, contemplate, deem, recollect, recall, speculate, conceive, envision, fancy, realize, surmise, rationalize, muse, ruminate, brood upon, digest |
| run       | race, hurry, speed, hasten, dash, sprint, dart, zoom, scamper, scoot, scurry, bustle, rush, hustle, trot, scramble, flee, take flight, skedaddle, jog, glide, bolt                                   |
| walk      | stroll, promenade, wander, saunter, march, trudge, tramp, hike, parade, tread, pace, step, prance, amble, trek, waddle, cruise   |
| laugh     | chuckle, giggle, roar, chortle, cackle, guffaw, snicker, titter, snicker   |
| yell      | shout, holler, scream, bellow, roar, howl, shriek, bawl, whoop, yowl   |
| eat       | gobble, devour, munch, snack, consume, swallow, dine, chew, feast, feed, nibble, gulp, wolf down, lunch, sup, ingest   |
| watch     | look, stare, gaze, peep, ogle, observe, notice, attend, regard, survey, scrutinize, pore over, eye, note, examine, view, tend, oversee, patrol, guard  |
| dream     | daydream, fantasize, wish, hope, envision, imagine, fancy, muse, desire  |
| see       | behold, discern, distinguish, spy, mark, mind, note, notice, observe, view, detect, glimpse, spot, witness   |
| sleep     | nap, doze, drowse, rest, nod off, snooze, get shut-eye   |
| say       | reply, converse, disclose, explain, inform, express, state, report, announce, mention, acknowledge, answer declare, suggest  |

**Using Vivid Adjectives**

| Dull Adjective                                   | Vivid Adjectives  |
|--|---|
| brown  | sandy, almond, amber, tawny, cinnamon, nutmeg, chocolate, coffee, rust  |
| blue   | sapphire, turquoise, aqua, peacock, azure, navy, indigo   |
| white  | snowy, marble, creamy, ivory, oyster, pearl, silver, platinum   |
| purple   | violet, lavender, lilac, orchid, mauve, plum, amethyst, mulberry, pansy, fuchsia  |
| gray   | ashen, dove, steely   |
| black  | jet, ebony, licorice, midnight  |
| green  | celery, mint, apple, lime, chartreuse   |
| yellow   | beige, buff, sunny, straw, banana, butter, buttercup, lemon, citron, canary, mustard, golden  |
| orange   | gold, topaz, tangerine, persimmon, carrot, apricot, peach   |
| red  | rose, coral, raspberry, strawberry, tomato, currant, crimson, vermilion, flame, ruby, burgundy, scarlet, cherry   |
| fast   | quick, speedy, rapid, swift, hasty, high-speed, express, immediate, instant   |
| slow   | sluggish, unhurried, measured, deliberate, leisurely, dawdling, lingering, gradual  |
| adjectives denoting appearance or state of being | flashy, formal, elegant, branching, twiggy, split, broken, frail, worn, drab, shabby, dull, stout, wide, scalloped, ruffled, frilled, crinkled, calm, sunny, pleasant, oval, conical, cylindrical, wiry, tubular, rotund, portly, swollen, lumpy, clustered, padded, tufted, pendulous, jutting, angular, triangular, fiery, blazing, fresh, immaculate, scrubbed, fragile, pale, pasty, sickly, tiny, miniscule, miniature, timid, reticent, fearful, tearful, nervous, terrified, hysterical, lean, slender, hardy, powerful, robust, sturdy, lively, exhausted, messy, rigid |

