

TRAIT PRACTICE: WORD CHOICE

PRACTICE FOR:

- **Using action verbs**
- **Using descriptive adjectives**
- **Using specific words**

More Action!

A *verb* is a word that describes an action. Some verbs are vague; they don't help you see the action clearly. Specific verbs have more action; they tell you exactly what is happening. This activity will help you think of verbs that show more action.

- A. Above each underlined verb, write a verb that shows more action. The first is done as an example.

sprints



1. Jeannie goes to the finish line and wins the race.
 2. Dwight goes slowly down the hall.
 3. Jan goes, "It's your turn to wash the dishes!"
 4. Liz angrily took her diary from her brother.
 5. Oscar carefully took his newborn baby to his proud wife.
 6. Sam took his mother to her birthday party.
 7. Ron said into Steve's ear, "Don't tell her!"
 8. "Shut the door!" said the angry child.
 9. "I'm so happy," the winner said as she held up her trophy.
 10. Sally makes her own clothes from her own patterns.
 11. This oven makes a perfect cake all the time.
 12. Rio makes himself run two miles every day.
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- B. Find the verbs in this story and underline the ones you think are vague. Over those verbs, write other verbs that show more action.

Cliff is taking Denise for a ride in his new car. He moves fast down the highway. Suddenly Denise says, "Look out!" A truck moves into their lane, right in front of them. Cliff put his foot on the brake – hard. The car goes first to the right, then to the left. "Don't use the brake!" Denise says. Cliff takes his foot off the brake and gets control of the car. "We're safe," Cliff goes to Denise.

Interesting Adjectives

An *adjective* is a word that describes a noun. (Nouns are words for things such as people, animals, places, ideas, etc.) Adjectives that are specific, give information. They can make your writing come alive. This activity will help you think of interesting adjectives when you write.

- A. Above each underlined adjective, write another adjective that gives more information. The first is done as an example.

loyal



1. The good fans cheered the winning team.
 2. The produce market is selling nice tomatoes today.
 3. The good salesperson won a good prize for having a good sales record.
 4. The bad driver made a bad decision when he went the wrong way.
 5. In the last few seconds, the good basketball player made a good shot.
 6. Ms. Pleasac would like a good job in a good office.
 7. Jay looked cool because he was wearing his neat jacket.
 8. It was a nice semester for Tom because he earned nice grades – all Bs and Cs.
 9. Voyager II made a nice discovery about Neptune’s rings.
 10. Roy took Janet out for a nice dinner for their anniversary.
 11. The choir sang a good song during their concert.
 12. The two friends had a bad argument and didn’t talk to each other for weeks.
 13. The babysitter got a bad headache from taking care of the bad children.
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Using Words That Are More Descriptive

Some descriptive words are used so often or can have so many different meanings that they do not give exact descriptions. These words usually can be replaced with **synonyms** that are more exact.

→Use your own vocabulary, a thesaurus, or a dictionary to replace each underlined word with a more **precise synonym**.

1. We had such a (nice) _____ time in the mountains.
2. Everyone admired her (cute) _____ dress.
3. She was such a (good) _____ worker that she had many job offers.
4. Those children are so (bad) _____ that baby-sitters never return.
5. He (said) _____ to the operator that the house was on fire.
6. Seeing the car accident was a (bad) _____ experience.
7. We were (happy) _____ to see the gifts under the Christmas tree.
8. His parents were (sad) _____ to see the poor report card.
9. We had a really (great) _____ party in the park.
10. The (pretty) _____ sunset made us very happy.
11. The children (went) _____ into the house to see the new puppy.
12. My father liked my (nice) _____ idea very much.
13. The ice cream was so (good) _____ that we asked for more.
14. The man (said) _____ that he was very upset.
15. The muddy dog (came) _____ through the open door.
16. The bride looked (pretty) _____ in her wedding dress.
17. The man (ran) _____ to the burning house as fast as he could to see if anyone was in the house.

Good Sentences

Look at the following examples. How are they different from each other? How have the words in dark type been changed?

- I. Luis works in a very **modern** factory. The building is new and modern, and it has all the most **modern** equipment.
- II. Luis works in a very modern factory. The building is new, and it has all the most up-to-date equipment.

Sometimes you repeat individual words unnecessarily, especially when you are adding supporting details to the main idea. If your main idea is that the factory is modern, you want the details to tell how that the factory is modern. The trick is not to keep repeating the word **modern**. Sometimes you can take it out altogether. Sometimes you need to find a **synonym** as a substitute.

Directions: Rewrite each group of sentences to avoid repeating words. Remember that you can either take out a repeated word or find a synonym to use instead. There is more than one way to rewrite each item.

- 1. I remember August 14 best of all because it was a perfect day. The weather was sunny and perfect, and the beach looked perfect as we stepped onto the sand.

- 2. A terrible disaster occurred. It is hard to imagine anything more terrible. Robert had made a terrible mistake.

- 3. Next year will be very important. It will be filled with important decisions. The important steps I take then will affect the rest of my life.

- 4. This article contains good ideas for saving money. It explains a good, easy way to find bargains when you shop. It also has some good tips on putting your money to work for you.

Practice Choosing Specific Words

Directions: Some words in these drafts are vague. Underline those words. Then revise the drafts: Cross out the vague words and write specific words above them. When you are finished, write a clean copy of each revised draft.

A. This draft is part of a letter. The writer is answering an ad for a job as a stock clerk in a hardware store. The ad appeared in a newspaper, *The Daily Bulletin*.

I am going for the job of stock clerk that you told about in the paper. I think I would be great at the job because I have great experience. I took wood shop in high school and it was my best thing. I did a part-time job as a stock clerk in a supermarket. I also helped out in my father's store. I have great work habits. I am responsible and cooperative. I can give you great references. I hope you will give me the job. You can call me at 555-4870.

B. This paragraph is part of a report about a movie. The writer thought the movie was exciting and liked it very much.

The movie I saw was called The Bug. I thought it was something. It was about a dude that was weird. He was a science person or something. He did things with bugs and stuff. He built a machine that had x-rays or something and zapped the bugs. They got weird. One day he had an accident and he zapped himself. He turned into a giant bug. It was weird. He went around the city and attacked things. The army wiped him out. The movie was too much. I think everybody should check it out.

