

Word Choice

Word Choice is the use of rich, colorful, precise language that communicates not just in a functional way, but in a way that moves and enlightens the reader. In good descriptive writing, strong word choice clarifies and expands ideas. In persuasive writing, careful word choice moves the reader to a new vision of things. **Strong word choice is characterized not so much by an exceptional vocabulary that impresses the reader, but more by the skill to use everyday words well.**

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5 Excellent	<p>Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words are specific and accurate. It is easy to understand just what the writer means. • Striking words and phrases often catch the reader’s eye and linger in the reader’s mind. • Language and phrasing is natural, effective, and appropriate for the audience. • Lively verbs add energy while specific nouns and modifiers add depth. • Choices in language enhance the meaning and clarify understanding. • Precision is obvious. The writer has taken care to put just the right word or phrase in just the right spot.
3 Average	<p>The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy. It is easy to figure out the writer’s meaning on a general level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words are adequate and correct in a general sense, and they support the meaning by not getting in the way. • Familiar words and phrases communicate but rarely capture the reader’s imagination. • Attempts at colorful language show a willingness to stretch and grow, but sometimes reach beyond the audience (thesaurus overload!). • Despite a few successes, the writing is marked by passive verbs, everyday nouns, and mundane modifiers. • The words and phrases are functional with only one or two fine moments. • The words may be refined in a couple of places, but the language looks more like the first thing that popped into the writer’s mind.
1 Poor	<p>The writer demonstrates a limited vocabulary or has not searched for words to convey specific meaning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words are so nonspecific and distracting that only a very limited meaning comes through. • Problems with language leave the reader wondering. Many of the words just don’t work in this piece. • Audience has not been considered. Language is used incorrectly, making the message secondary to the misfires with the words. • Limited vocabulary and/or misused parts of speech seriously impair understanding. • Words and phrases are so unimaginative and lifeless that they detract from the meaning. • Jargon or clichés distract or mislead. Redundancy may distract the reader.