

## STRONG AND WEAK VERB LIST

### WEAK VERBS (Summary)

says	relates	goes on to say	tells
explains	states	shows	the quote says this shows

### STRONG VERBS (Analysis)

implies	trivializes	flatters	qualifies	processes	describes	suggests
denigrates	lionizes	dismisses	analyzes	questions	compares	vilifies
praises	supports	enumerates	contrasts	emphasizes	demonizes	establishes
admonishes	expounds	argues	defines	ridicules	minimizes	narrates
lists	warns					

### Powerful and meaningful verbs to use in your analyses: Alternatives to “show”

acknowledge	discuss	implement	optimize	represent
address	dismiss	implicate	organize	resolve
analyze	distinguish	imply	outline	retrieve
apply	duplicate	improve	overstate	reveal
argue	elaborate	include	persist	revise
assert	emphasize	incorporate	point out	separate
augment	employ	indicate	possess	shape
broaden	enable	induce	predict	signify
calculate	engage	initiate	present	simulate
capitalize	enhance	inquire	probe	solve
characterize	establish	instigate	produce	specify
claim	evaluate	integrate	promote	structure
clarify	exacerbate	interpret	propose	suggest
compare	examine	intervene	prove	summarize
complicate	exclude	invert	provide	support
confine	exhibit	isolate	qualify	suspend
connect	expand	justify	quantify	sustain
consider	explain	locate	question	tailor
construct	exploit	loosen	realize	terminate
contradict	express	maintain	recommend	testify
correct	extend	manifest	reconstruct	theorize
create	facilitate	manipulate	redefine	translate
convince	feature	measure	reduce	undermine
critique	forecast	merge	refer	understand
declare	formulate	minimize	reference	unify
deduce	fracture	modify	refine	utilize
defend	generalize	monitor	reflect	validate
demonstrate	group	necessitate	refute	vary
deny	guide	negate	regard	view
describe	Hamper	nullify	reject	vindicate
determine	hypothesize	obscure	relate	yield
differentiate	identify	observe	rely	
disagree	illuminate	obtain	remove	
discard	illustrate	offer	repair	
discover	impair	omit	report	

## Analyzing DICTION

**Diction** is simply the **words** the writer chooses to convey a particular meaning.

When analyzing diction, look for **specific words** or short phrases that seem stronger than the others (ex. Bragg's use of *slingshot* instead of *travel*). Diction is NEVER the entire sentence!

Also, look for a **pattern** (or similarity) in the words the writer chooses (ex. Do the words imply sadness, happiness, etc?). This pattern helps to create a particular kind of diction.

This pattern can also include **repetition** of the same words or phrases. Repeating the same word or phrase helps the reader emphasize a point, feeling, etc.

Effective diction is shaped by words that are clear, concrete, and exact. Good writers avoid words like *pretty*, *nice*, and *bad* because they are not specific enough. Instead, they rely on words that invoke a specific effect in order to bring the reader into the event being described.

### Examples:

A coat isn't *torn*; it is *tattered*.

The US Army does not *want* revenge; it is *thirsting* for revenge.

A door does not *shut*; it *thuds*.

Diction depends on **subject**, **purpose**, **occasion**, and **audience**.

The **subject** often determines how specific or sophisticated the diction needs to be. For example, articles on computers are filled with a specialized language: e-mail, e-shopping, web, interface. Many topics generated special vocabularies to convey meaning.

The writer's **purpose** – whether to persuade, entertain, inform – partly determines diction. Words chosen to impart a particular effect on the reader reflect the writer's purpose. For example, if an author's purpose is to inform, the reader should expect straightforward diction. On the other hand, if the author's purpose is to entertain, the readers will likely encounter words used in ironic, playful, or unexpected ways.

Diction also depends on **occasion**. Formal diction is reserved for scholarly writing and serious texts. Informal diction is often used in narrative essays and newspaper editorials. Colloquial diction and slang are typically used to capture the language of a particular time frame or culture.

Finally, the type of diction a writer uses depends on the **audience** (readers, listeners). An author who uses sophisticated diction knows he is writing for an intelligent audience. An author who uses more informal diction knows he is writing for an audience of varied intelligence.

When you are **writing an essay** in which you are analyzing the diction of the writer:

Avoid saying: "The writer used diction..." – since this is obvious (diction IS the words on the page; without them, the page would be blank ☺).

Instead, say: "The writer creates a \_\_\_\_\_ diction through the use of..." OR  
"The language of the text is \_\_\_\_\_."

Below are just a few words that you may use to **describe the type of diction** used by the writer. You may want to add words to this list or circle the ones you use frequently.

abstract	curt	inflammatory	passionate	subdued
academic	denotative	inflated	patriotic	symbolic
ambiguous	detached	informal	pedantic	tame
biting	divisive	insincere	picturesque	technical
bombastic	emotional	jargon	plain	trite
brusque	esoteric	learned	poetic	unifying
cacophonous	euphemistic	literal	political	uppity
casual	euphonious	loaded	polysyllabic	vague
caustic	everyday	lyrical	precise	vulgar
colloquial	exact	melodious	pretentious	<b>OTHERS:</b>
colorful	fanciful	monosyllabic	provincial	abstract diction
common	figurative	nostalgic	romantic	concrete diction
concrete	flowery	obscene	scholarly	elevated/formal
connotative	folksy	obscure	sentimental	low/informal
conversational	formal	offensive	shocking	
crisp	grandiose	ordinary	sincere	
cultured	idiomatic	ornate	slang	

# Analyzing SYNTAX

**Syntax** refers to the way words are arranged within sentences. **Schemes** are used in syntax.

## Sentence Length

Another aspect of syntax is **sentence length**. Good writers will use a variety for emphasis.

- **Short sentences** – imply straightforward
- **Long sentences** – imply descriptive, detailed

## Sentence Type

A third aspect of syntax is sentence type. Again, good writers use a variety.

- **Simple**: subject-verb (I went to the store.)
- **Compound**: 2 independent clauses joined by a conjunction (I went to the store, and I bought candy.)
- **Complex**: independent clause and dependent clause (While traveling to the store, I saw my friend.)
- **Compound-complex**: 2 independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses (While traveling to the store, I saw my friend, and she gave me money for candy.)
- **Declarative**: statement (I went to the store.)
- **Exclamatory**: strong feeling (What a wonderful candy store!)
- **Interrogative**: question (Is this a store?)
- **Imperative**: command (Go to the store.)

## Punctuation

A final aspect of syntax is punctuation. Yes, good writers use a variety here too.

- **Semicolon (;)** -- gives equal weight to two or more independent clauses in a sentence. Writers use this to reinforce parallel ideas and show how both ideas are equally important
- **Colon (:)** -- the reader's attention to the words that follow. Writers use this to show the reader that the information after the colon is important.
- **Dash (-)** marks a sudden change in thought or tone or sets off a brief summary

## **SYNTAX WORDS**

balanced sentence  
complex sentence  
compound  
sentence  
compound-  
complex sentence  
declarative  
exclamatory  
imperative  
interrogative

interruption  
inversion  
juxtaposition  
loose/cumulative sentence  
parallel structure  
periodic sentence  
repetition rhetorical  
question  
simple sentence

## Analyzing TONE

**Tone** is the writer's attitude or feeling about the subject of his text.

It is a special kind of rhetorical strategy because **tone is created by the writer's use of all of the other rhetorical strategies.**

- Diction & Tropes
- Syntax & Schemes
- Details & Lack of Details

When discussing an author's tone, you must be careful to **choose the right word**. Below is a list of tone words. Use them in your essays to describe the tone of the piece but only if you are sure you know the word's meaning (not sure – look it up in a dictionary).

When **writing your essay**, avoid saying: "The writer uses tone" since ALL writers use a tone of some kind. Instead, say: "The writer creates a \_\_\_\_\_ tone..."

angry	condescending	mocking	dreamy
sad	happy	sarcastic	shocking
sentimental	boring	sweet	seductive
afraid	poignant	objective	restrained
sharp	sympathetic	nostalgic	somber
cold	confused	vexed	candid
fanciful	apologetic	vibrant	proud
detached	hollow	zealous	giddy
upset	childish	tired	pitiful
urgent	humorous	frivolous	dramatic
complimentary	joyful	irrelevant	provocative
contemptuous	peaceful	bitter	didactic
silly	horrific	audacious	lugubrious
joking	allusive	benevolent	sentimental

**MOOD WORDS:** Sometimes the TONE will set a MOOD.

bleak	lonely	serene
dark	ominous	soothing
delirious	peaceful	suspenseful
dismal	playful	tense
eerie	quizzical	threatening
elegiac	reproachful	uplifting
haunting	satiric	whimsical

**CHARACTER WORDS:** Sometimes you need to describe the SPEAKER.

absorbed  
aggressive  
aloof  
ambitious  
amorous  
anxious  
apathetic  
argumentative  
arrogant  
bitter  
bored  
carefree  
careless  
cautious  
churlish  
compassionate  
conceited  
conniving

curious  
deceitful  
demure  
detached  
devoted  
dishonest  
easygoing  
envious  
exacting  
frantic  
fretful  
gregarious  
intelligent  
irritable  
loquacious  
manipulative  
mendacious  
naïve

nervous  
noble  
outgoing  
patient  
picky  
Scrupulous  
self-involved  
sincere  
sloppy  
spontaneous  
suspicious  
talkative  
testy  
uninvolved  
unpredictable  
vindictive  
welcoming  
wise  
worried