

Teaching and Assessing Writing with the 6-Traits

University of Wisconsin - Stout



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Module 5: Introduction

Word Choice - Developing Descriptive Vocabulary to 'Show' What You Know

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Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of the Trait: Word Choice
- Review methods for teaching Word Choice
- Reflect on your own practices for teaching Word Choice
- Continue practicing Traits assessment

"A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanging. It is the skin of a living thought and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and time in which it is used."

~ Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., (1841 -1935), American Jurist

Introduction:

Choosing just the right word is an art. Word Choice in the hands of an artist is poetry or stunning prose. Like soup stock, accurate, natural, refreshing words are essential ingredients for "tasty" writing. Words lend their flavor to the other Traits as well.

- Word Choice reflects the writer's personality and impacts Voice.
- Word Choice reveals a writer's expertise enhancing Ideas.
- Word Choice seeds Idea generation.
- Word Choice extends or shortens a statement providing Sentence Fluency.

For most students *any* word will do. By insisting on rich description we

can push our students into better Word Choice. Words that appeal to the senses, build images, reveal detail, and radiate expertise are fundamental to strong writing. However, you don't need to write with a thesaurus at your side. It is not all "euphonious selection of ingenious phrases." Strong Word Choice isn't exceptional vocabulary; it is the skill of using everyday words well. This *everyday* skill is what students must master.

Impressive Word Choice isn't found by grammar or vocabulary drill alone. In fact, it is the general abstraction of words from the ability to evoke feelings and ideas that blunts student interest in finding the right word. As students grasp this power to inspire, entertain, and influence their audiences with just the right word, they will become hungry for vivid verbs, specific nouns, and power vocabulary of all kinds.

In this week's [lecture](#), Show Me Don't Tell Me, I will share some methods that rekindle student interest in words. How will you know it they get it? They will *show* you!

*As always feel free to e-mail me with questions or comments.

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