

DICTION

The style of writing determined by the choice of words by a writer.

The Writing and Reading Center

Why does diction matter?

Diction conveys a mood, tone and atmosphere to readers.

Diction Elements to Consider:

- ❖ Word Choice
- ❖ Your “Voice”
- ❖ Sentence Structure

Picking the right word choice:

- ❖ The word should be right and accurate
- ❖ Words should fit the context in which it is used.
- ❖ The word should be the one that the reader will understand most easily.

When is it good to use a thesaurus?

Use a thesaurus when:

- ❖ You’ve used a word twice in a sentence or in close proximity.
- ❖ The word you wrote of isn’t quite right for the context.
- ❖ You are looking for a more specific word.
- ❖ The word you used doesn’t fit the voice you have established for the piece.

Don’t use a thesaurus when:

- ❖ You think the word you wrote sounds dumb.
- ❖ You have “very” in front of the word (EX: very pretty = beautiful)
- ❖ You think you need a longer word

- ❖ Make sure you know what the word means before using it

What should you do instead of reaching straight for the thesaurus?

- ❖ Read your sentence out loud and double check that you still think you need to change your word
- ❖ Try to come up with other words on your own
- ❖ See if the word really needs to change or if it's just you thinking you need to make it sound different
- ❖ Try one of the tools below

Tools

- ❖ These are some visual thesaurus websites:
 - Visuwords - <http://visuwords.com/>
 - Pros: No membership is required, it shows you more than just connections, it provides definitions
 - Cons: You cannot click between words, you have to type the word into the search bar
 - Visual Thesaurus - <https://www.visualthesaurus.com/>
 - Pros: It allows you to click the link between words and see how they are related
 - Cons: It requires a membership after a very short period of time, BUT if you close the browser and reopen it, it will reset your trial period

Your “Voice”:

- ❖ Your writing should sound like you wrote it
- ❖ In some cases it is acceptable to modify your voice but make sure that you never change it so much that it never sounds like you
- ❖ If you're worried, read it out loud and see if it sounds normal to you, if it doesn't, try changing the parts that sound unnatural (within reason and fitting to the style of piece)

Sentence Structure:

- ❖ Sentence structure is definitely something you can play with, but like finding your “voice”, it should still make sense
- ❖ Shorter sentences are high impact
- ❖ If you are trying to vary your sentence structure, the colon and semicolon are your friends