

WORDS TO DESCRIBE DICTION

*Don't just say "the author uses diction" - EVERY writer uses words!
We MUST use adjectives to describe diction. Describe the effect of this writer's word choice.*

1) **Abstract** vs. **Concrete**
 refers to intangible things refers to tangible things
 (understood by the mind, not the senses) (identified by the 5 senses)
Ex: "God is love." "Truth is the highest aspiration." Ex: "dog," "burp," "salty," "sharp," "smelly"

2) **Elevated** vs. **Colloquial**
 complex words, superior tone everyday jargon
Ex: "Ensure that you wear the appropriate attire." Ex: "You'll wanna wear the right thing."

3) **Convoluted** vs. **Simple**
 complex words, difficult to follow easy, clear words (short, basic words)

4) **Denotative** vs. **Connotative**
 containing an exact meaning containing a suggested meaning
Ex: "dress," "house," "young" Ex: "gown," "home," "juvenile"

5) **Euphonious** vs. **Cacophonous**
 pleasant sounding harsh sounding
Ex: "melodic Southern speech," Ex: "raucous," "croak," "rasping"
 "silver laughter," "soft voices"

More Definitions

Ambiguous	vague	Informal	conversational
Bombastic	arrogant,	Loaded	heavy emotional charge
Convoluted	complex, difficult to follow	Moralistic	puritanical, righteous
Didactic	instructional; intended to teach	Pedantic	scholarly, bookish
Elevated	complex words, superior tone	Poetic	melodious, romantic
Emotional	expressive of emotions	Pretentious	pompous, arrogant
Esoteric	understood by a chosen few	Sharp	harsh
Formal	academic, conventional	Simple	clear (short, easy words)
Figurative	words serving to illustrate	Verbose	talkative and wordy
Idiomatic	peculiar	Vivid	full of life and animation

Other, More Common Adjectives!

Casual	Ordinary	Sarcastic
Harsh	Passionate	Shocking
Humorous	Patriotic	Sincere
Offensive	Political	

WORDS TO DESCRIBE TONE

POSITIVE TONE WORDS

Amiable	Encouraging	Loving
Amused	Energetic	Optimistic
Appreciative	Enthusiastic	Peaceful
Brave	Exuberant	Pleasant
Calm	Friendly	Proud
Cheery	Happy	Relaxed
Compassionate	Hopeful	Reverent
Complimentary	Jovial	Romantic
Consoling	Jubilant	Soothing
Ecstatic	Lighthearted	Sympathetic

NEUTRAL TONE WORDS

Ambivalent	Indirect	Objective
Contemplative	Informal	Patriotic
Detached	Informative	Reflective
Didactic	Instructive	Restrained
Factual	Intimate	Questioning
Formal	Learned	Sentimental
Judgmental	Meditative	Shocked
Incredulous	Nostalgic	Urgent

NEGATIVE TONE WORDS

Abhorring	Bitter	Harsh
Angry	Condescending	Hopeless
Annoyed	Contemptuous	Pedantic
Antagonistic	Derisive	Pessimistic
Apprehensive	Derogatory	Scornful
Belligerent	Frightened	Violent

HUMOROUS/IRONIC/SARCASTIC TONE WORDS

Bantering	Ironic	Sardonic
Comical	Joking	Taunting
Cynical	Mocking	Teasing
Droll	Satiric	Wry

STRONG TONE WORDS

Ardent	Direct	Matter-of-Fact
Assertive	Dominating	Persuasive
Authoritative	Domineering	Stern
Candid	Earnest	Straightforward
Confident	Fervent	Strong
Determined	Impassioned	

WORDS TO DESCRIBE SYNTAX

Syntax is the order of words and phrases in creating a sentence.

Sentence Types

Declarative
Assertive – a statement

Imperative
Authoritative – command

Interrogative
Asks a question

Exclamatory
Expresses emotion

Sentence Length

Does the sentence length fit the subject matter?

What variety of lengths is present?

Why is the sentence length effective?

Staccato Syntax – a series of short, very abrupt sentences (1-2 words)

Example: “Freedom is running. Going outside. It’s basketball.”

Effect: Forceful, direct, to the point

Telegraphic Syntax – fewer than 8 words in a sentence, typically omit grammatical/function words.

Example: “Leave on doorstep.” or “Will arrive tomorrow 5pm.”

Effect: Forceful, direct (especially when surrounded by longer sentences)

Long and Involved Syntax – more than 30 words in sentence

Example: “To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, that is genius.”

Effect: Meaning not completed until end of sentence; marked by suspended syntax

Sentence Structure

Does the sentence length fit the subject matter?

What variety of lengths is present?

Simple Sentence – one independent clause (**Effect:** child-like quality; highlights importance among longer sentences)

Compound Sentence – two independent clauses combined by conjunction (**Effect:** balance; ideas of equal importance)

Complex Sentence – one independent and 1+ dependent clause(s) (**Effect:** longer, more complex)

Compound-Complex Sentence – 2+ independent clauses and 1+ dependant clause(s) (**Effect:** longer, more complex)

Loose Sentence – a sentence in which the main idea is elaborated on by successive clauses or phrases.

Example: We reached Edmonton / that morning / after a turbulent flight / and some exciting experiences.

Effect:

Periodic Sentence – a sentence whose meaning is not complete until the end of the clause or phrase.

Example: That morning, after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences, we reached Edmonton.

Effect: Builds up to climax/meaning slowly, keeps reader in suspense.

Balanced Syntax – employs parallel structure of approximately the same length and importance

Example: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

Effect: Creates symmetry and balance between ideas in sentence; often involves repetition.

Other Techniques that Characterize Syntax

Parallelism
Juxtaposition

Repetition
Rhetorical question

Anaphora