

Teacher-Friendly Scoring Guide for the Word Choice Trait

The word choice trait reflects the specific vocabulary the writer uses to convey meaning and enlighten the reader.

6 EXCEPTIONAL

- A. **Choosing Zippy Verbs:** The writer uses “action words” effectively: verbs that add energy to the writing.
- B. **Picking “Just-Right” Words:** The writer selects words with care and intent. Places in the writing catch the reader’s attention because the words or phrases work so well.
- C. **Stretching for Never-Before-Tried Words:** The writer tries words that are new to him or her because they communicate precisely what he or she is trying to say. He or she doesn’t settle for the first word that comes to mind.
- D. **Using Words to Create Meaning:** The writer uses everyday words well—words that are correct, colorful, and creative. He or she may even try to use figurative language, such as metaphors and alliteration.

5 STRONG

4 REFINING

- A. **Choosing Zippy Verbs:** The writer uses verbs correctly but doesn’t choose zippy ones. He or she may use forms of “to be” almost exclusively.
- B. **Picking “Just-Right” Words:** The writer offers only one or two moments that sparkle or show precision. Most of the words and phrases are basic and unoriginal.
- C. **Stretching for Never-Before-Tried Words:** The writer seems comfortable with the first word that comes to mind. He or she makes no attempt to draw from the large bank of words in his or her vocabulary.
- D. **Using Words to Create Meaning:** The writer uses ordinary and/or imprecise words to explain or tell, making it hard for the reader to get a clear picture of what he or she is trying to convey. Occasional misused words bog down the reader.

3 DEVELOPING

2 EMERGING

- A. **Choosing Zippy Verbs:** The writer seems confused about how to apply verbs. He or she neglects to use them, or uses them incorrectly, in places where they could be effective.
- B. **Picking “Just-Right” Words:** The writer is trying to create words, but with very limited success. He or she is only writing simple words, which, at times, are lost in a string of letters.
- C. **Stretching for Never-Before-Tried Words:** The writer uses only words he or she knows: name, simple high-frequency words, words around the room, and so on. Few words are original.
- D. **Using Words to Create Meaning:** The writer uses words that are obvious choices, such as labels on pictures or key names or places. Readers are challenged to understand the words because there are standard and nonstandard letters throughout.

1 RUDIMENTARY