

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. **Applying Strong Verbs:** The writer uses many “action words,” giving the piece punch and pizzazz. He or she has stretched to find lively verbs that add energy to the piece.
- B. **Selecting Striking Words and Phrases:** The writer uses many finely honed words and phrases. His or her creative and effective use of literary techniques, such as alliteration, simile, and metaphor, make the piece a pleasure to read.
- C. **Using Specific and Accurate Words:** The writer uses words with precision. He or she selects words the reader needs to fully understand the message. The writer chooses nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and so forth that create clarity and bring the topic to life.
- D. **Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning:** The writer uses words to capture the reader’s imagination and to enhance the piece’s meaning. There is a deliberate attempt to choose the best word over the first word that comes to mind.

5 STRONG

4 REFINING

- A. **Applying Strong Verbs:** The writer uses the passive voice quite a bit and includes few “action words” to give the piece energy.
- B. **Selecting Striking Words and Phrases:** The writer provides little evidence that he or she has stretched for the best words or phrases. He or she may have attempted to use literary techniques, but they are clichés for the most part.
- C. **Using Specific and Accurate Words:** The writer presents specific and accurate words, except for those related to sophisticated and/or content-related topics. Technical or irrelevant jargon is off-putting to the reader. The words rarely capture the reader’s imagination.
- D. **Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning:** The writer fills the piece with unoriginal language rather than language that results from careful revision. The words communicate the basic idea, but they are ordinary and uninspired.

3 DEVELOPING

2 EMERGING

- A. **Applying Strong Verbs:** The writer makes no attempt at selecting verbs with energy. The passive voice dominates the piece.
- B. **Selecting Striking Words and Phrases:** The writer uses words that are repetitive, vague, and/or unimaginative. Limited meaning comes through because the words are so lifeless.
- C. **Using Specific and Accurate Words:** The writer misuses words, making it difficult to understand what he or she is attempting to convey. Or he or she uses words that are so technical, inappropriate, or irrelevant that the average reader can hardly understand what the writer is saying.
- D. **Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning:** The writer uses many words and phrases that simply do not work. Little meaning comes through because the language is so imprecise and distracting.

1 RUDIMENTARY