

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
(understood by the mind, not the senses)
Ex: "God is love." "Truth is the highest aspiration."

refers to tangible things
(identified by the 5 senses)
Ex: "dog," "burp," "salty," "sharp," "smelly"

2)

Elevated

vs.

Colloquial

complex words, superior tone
Ex: "Ensure that you wear the appropriate attire."

everyday jargon
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
Ex: "dress," "house," "young"

containing a suggested meaning
Ex: "gown," "home," "juvenile"

5)

Euphonious

vs.

Cacophonous

pleasant sounding
Ex: "melodic Southern speech,"
"silver laughter," "soft voices"

harsh sounding

Ex: "raucous," "croak," "rasping"

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 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
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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