

## Mini-Lesson: Using Strong Verbs

Often, we use adjectives and adverbs to elaborate and enrich our writing. Professional writers, however, tell us that using adjectives and adverbs is not always the best way to enhance writing. Ursula Le Guin (1998), for example, recommends “a watchful attitude and a thoughtful, careful choice of adjectives and adverbs, because the bakery of English is rich beyond belief, and narrative prose, particularly if it’s going a long distance, needs more muscle than fat.” (62) Specific verbs provide the needed muscle.

### Goal for Student Writers

To generate specific verbs to replace general verbs and then use these strong verbs in narrative writing.

### Resources

Set of “Action Cards” (Fig. 5.4) for each group of three or four students in the class. These may be reproduced on card stock or construction paper and then laminated.

### Teacher and Students

In small groups, students select one person to carry out the actions that are described on one of the cards. The name of the student who does the actions is used in the blank in each sentence. Another student reads the first sentence on the card. The group generates specific verbs to replace the verb and adverb in the sentence, using dictionaries or thesauri. For example, students may replace “closed the door carefully” with “nudged the door closed”, or “slid the door closed.” One student in the group records the specific verbs generated by the group. The new sentences are read using the more specific verbs and the actor performs the actions. Students can create new sentences with additional adverbs, as well. Students repeat the process using all the remaining sentences on the card. For the next cards, students within the group switch roles so everyone has a chance to be the reader and actor. Students post their charts and then do a carousel activity by moving in their groups from chart to chart, noting the specific verbs that each group has generated.

### Students

When writing or revising their narratives, students may use these charts to help them find stronger, more descriptive verbs.

## Action Cards

### Using Strong Verbs

Photocopy and cut into sets of cards—  
one set for each group of three or four students

<p>_____ closed the door carefully.</p> <p>_____ closed the door angrily.</p> <p>_____ closed the door _____.</p>	<p>_____ held the ball carefully.</p> <p>_____ held the ball carelessly.</p> <p>_____ held the ball _____.</p>
<p>“Hello,” _____ said loudly.</p> <p>“Hello,” _____ said quietly.</p> <p>“Hello,” _____ said sadly.</p> <p>“Hello,” _____ said disgustedly.</p> <p>“Hello,” _____ said _____.</p>	<p>_____ walked down the street loudly.</p> <p>_____ walked down the street quietly.</p> <p>_____ walked down the street sadly.</p> <p>_____ walked down the street disgustedly.</p> <p>_____ walked down the street _____.</p>

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Fig. 5.4

<p>_____ took the pencil angrily.</p> <p>_____ took the pencil quickly.</p> <p>_____ took the pencil timidly.</p> <p>_____ took the pencil confidently.</p> <p>_____ took the pencil _____.</p>	<p>_____ hit the ball lightly.</p> <p>_____ hit the ball forcefully.</p> <p>_____ hit the ball timidly.</p> <p>_____ hit the ball confidently.</p> <p>_____ hit the ball _____.</p>
<p>_____ looked out the window quickly.</p> <p>_____ looked out the window for a long time.</p> <p>_____ looked out the window sadly.</p> <p>_____ looked out the window angrily.</p> <p>_____ looked out the window _____.</p>	<p>_____ ate the piece of cake daintily.</p> <p>_____ ate the piece of cake rudely.</p> <p>_____ ate the piece of cake slowly.</p> <p>_____ ate the piece of cake quickly.</p> <p>_____ ate the piece of cake _____.</p>

Fig. 5.4 (cont'd)