
Strong Active Verbs

VERBS

Active verbs that replace any 'to be' verb.

accentuates	accepts	achieves	adopts	advocates*
affects	alleviates	allows	alludes*	alters*
analyzes	approaches	argues	ascertains*	assesses*
assumes	attacks	attempts	attributes*	avoids
bases	believes	challenges	changes	characterizes
chooses	chronicles	claims	comments	compares
compels*	completes	concerns	concludes	condescends
conducts	conforms	confronts*	considers	contends*
contests*	contrasts	contributes	conveys	convinces
defines	defies	demonstrates	depicts*	describes
delineates*	despises	details	determines	develops
deviates*	differentiates*	differs	directs	disappoints
discovers	discusses	displays	disputes	disrupts*
distinguishes	distorts*	downplays	dramatizes	elevates
elicits*	emphasizes	encounters	enhances	enriches
enumerates*	envisions	evokes	excludes	expands
experiences	explains	expresses	extends	extrapolates*
fantasizes	focuses	forces	foreshadows	functions
generalizes*	guides	heightens	highlights	hints
holds	honors	identifies	illustrates	illuminates
imagines	impels*	implies*	includes	indicates
infers*	inspires	intends	interprets	interrupts
inundates*	justifies	juxtaposes*	lambasts''	laments*
lampoons*	lists	maintains	makes	manages
manipulates	minimizes	moralizes*	muses*	notes
observes	opposes	organizes	overstates	outlines
patronizes*	performs	permits	personifies*	persuades
ponders*	portrays	postulates*	prepares	presents
presumes	produces	projects	promotes	proposes
provides	qualifies*	questions	rationalizes	reasons
recalls	recites	recollects	records	recounts
reflects	refers	regards	regrets	rejects
represents	results	reveals	ridicules	satirizes*
seems	sees	selects	specifies	speculates*
states	strives*	suggests	summarizes	supplies
supports	suppresses*	symbolizes	sympathizes	traces
understands	vacillates*	values	verifies*	

VERBS TO USE INSTEAD OF EXEMPLIFIES

appears	asserts	attests to	certifies	confirms
connotes*	corroborates*	defines	demonstrates	denotes*
depicts	discloses*	elucidates*	endorses*	establishes
evinces*	exhibits	expounds*	exposes	intimates*
manifests*	points to	proves	ratifies*	relates
shows	substantiates*	suggests	typifies*	upholds
validates*				

ADJECTIVES FOR USE IN LITERARY/RHETORICAL DISCUSSION

DESCRIBING THE AUTHOR

cultured	intellectual	erudite*	well-read	sagacious*
sensible	rational	philosophic*	analytical	imaginative
perceptive	visionary*	prophetic*	optimistic	broad-minded*
idealistic*	spiritual	orthodox*	unorthodox*	sympathetic
sophisticated*	original	whimsical*	humorous	conservative*
liberal*	progressive*	radical*	reactionary*	unprejudiced
realistic*	romantic*	shallow	superficial	bigoted
opinionated*	intolerant	hypocritical*	fanatical*	provincial*
narrow-minded*	sentimental	skeptical*	cynical*	

DESCRIBING STYLE/CONTENT

lucid*	graphic*	intelligible*	explicit*	precise
exact	concise*	succinct*	condensed*	pithy*
piquant*	aphoristic*	sylogistic*	allusive*	metaphorical
poetic	prosaic*	plain	simple	homespun*
pure	vigorous*	forceful	eloquent*	sonorous*
fluent	glib*	natural	restrained*	smooth
polished*	classical	artistic	bombastic*	extravagant
rhetorical*	turgid*	pompous*	grandiose*	obscure*
vague	diffuse*	verbose*	pedantic*	ponderous*
ungraceful	harsh	abrupt*	labored*	awkward
unpolished	crude*	vulgar*	formal	artificial
utilitarian*	humanistic*	pragmatic*	naturalistic*	impressionistic*
subjective*	melodramatic*	fanciful*	authentic*	plausible*
credible*	recondite*	controversial	mystical*	improbable*
absurd	trivial	commonplace	heretical*	

DESCRIBING DICTION

high or formal	low or informal	neutral	precise	exact
concrete	abstract*	plain	simple	homespun
esoteric*	learned	cultured	literal*	figurative*
connotative*	symbolic	picturesque*	sensuous*	literary
provincial*	colloquial*	slang*	idiomatic*	neologistic*
inexact	euphemistic*	trite*	obscure*	pedantic*
bombastic*	grotesque	vulgar*	jargon*	emotional
obtuse*	moralistic*	ordinary	scholarly	insipid*
proper	pretentious*	old-fashioned		

DESCRIBING SYNTAX

loose*	periodic*	balanced*	interrupted	simple*
compound*	complex*	compound-complex*	declarative*	interrogative*
imperative*	exclamatory*	telegraphic*	antithetic*	inverted*
euphonic*	rhythmical	epigrammatic*	emphatic	incoherent
rambling	tortuous	jerky	cacophonic*	monotonous
spare	austere*	unadorned*	jumbled	chaotic
obfuscating*	journalistic*	terse*	laconic*	mellifluous*
musical	lilting*	lyrical*	elegant	solid
thudding	dry	ornate*	elaborate	flowery
erudite*	grating*	staccato*	abrupt*	sprawling

DESCRIBING ORGANIZATION/STRUCTURE/POINT OF VIEW

spatial*	chronological	flashback	flash forward*	in media res*
step-by-step	objective*	subjective*	nostalgic*	reminiscent
contemplative*	reflective*	clinical*	impersonal*	dramatic*
omniscient*	limited*			

DESCRIBING IMAGERY (Substitute these precise adjectives for less precise ones such as *vivid*, *colorful*, and *powerful*.)

bucolic*	pastoral*	gustatory*	olfactory*	tactile*
kinetic*	kinesthetic*	sensual*	sacred	chaotic
auditory*	religious	animal	war/military	
of death, decay, decomposition				

DESCRIBING CHARACTERS (Great substitutions for *pretty* and *ugly*!)

Physical Qualities

manly	virile*	robust*	hardy*	sturdy
strapping*	stalwart*	muscular	brawny*	lovely
fair	comely*	handsome	dainty	delicate
graceful	elegant	shapely	attractive	winsome*
ravishing*	dapper*	immaculate	adroit*	dexterous*
adept*	skillful	agile*	nimble*	active
lively	spirited*	vivacious*	weak	feeble*
sickly	frail	decrepit*	emaciated*	cadaverous*
effeminate*	unwomanly	hideous	homely*	course*
unkempt*	slovenly*	awkward	clumsy	ungainly*
graceless	bizarre*	grotesque	incongruous*	ghastly
repellent*	repugnant*	repulsive	odious*	invidious*
loathsome*				

Mental Qualities (Great substitutions for *smart* and *stupid*! Which comments would you like to see on your papers?)

educated	erudite*	scholarly	wise	astute*
intellectual	precocious*	capable	competent	gifted
apt*	rational	reasonable	sensible	shrewd*
prudent*	observant	clever	ingenious*	inventive
subtle*	cunning*	crafty*	wily*	unintelligent
unschooled*	unlettered*	ignorant	illiterate*	inane*
irrational	puerile*	foolish	fatuous*	vacuous*
simple	thick-skulled*	idiotic	imbecilic*	witless*
deranged*	demented*	articulate*	eloquent*	

Moral Qualities (Great substitutions for *good* and *bad*!)

idealistic*	innocent	virtuous*	faultless	righteous*
guileless*	upright*	exemplary	chaste*	pure
undefiled*	temperate*	abstemious*	austere*	ascetic*
puritanical*	truthful	honorable	trustworthy	straightforward*
decent	respectable	wicked	corrupt*	degenerate*
notorious*	vicious	incorrigible*	dissembling*	infamous*
immoral*	unprincipled*	reprobate*	depraved*	indecent*
ribald*	vulgar*	intemperate*	sensual*	dissolute*
deceitful	dishonest	unscrupulous*	dishonorable*	base*
vile*	foul*	recalcitrant*	philandering*	opportunistic*

Spiritual Qualities (More great substitutions for *good* and *bad*!)

religious	reverent	pious*	devout*	faithful
regenerate*	holy	saintly	angelic	skeptical*
agnostic*	atheistic*	irreligious*	impious*	irreverent*
profane*	sacrilegious*	materialistic	carnal*	godless
diabolic*	fiendlike*	blasphemous*	unregenerate*	altruistic*
charitable				

Social Qualities (Terrific substitutions for *nice* and *mean*!)

civil*	amicable*	contentious*	unpolished*	sullen*
tactful*	courteous	cooperative	genial*	affable*
hospitable*	gracious*	amiable*	cordial*	congenial*

convivial*
anti-social*
discourteous
ill-mannered
brusque*
grumpy
waspyish*

jovial*
acrimonious*
impudent*
unrefined
churlish*
fractious*
taciturn*

jolly
quarrelsome
impolite
rustic*
fawning*
crusty*
reticent*

urbane*
antagonistic*
insolent*
provincial*
obsequious*
peevish*
gregarious*

suave*
misanthropic*
ill-bred
boorish*
sniveling*
petulant*
garrulous*

THE LANGUAGE OF ARGUMENT

VERBS

attack
challenge
validate
answer
assert

charge
qualify
confirm
agree/disagree
generalize

claim
counter
affirm*
verify
specify

propose
repudiate*
argue
resolve
debate

defend
allege*
assume
concede*
dispute

NOUNS

warrant
solution
vested interest
logos*
induction*
audience
rebuttal*
refutation
invective*
qualifier*

validity
resolution
conflict of interests
counterargument
fallacy*
purpose
antithesis*
slippery slope*
proponent*
begging the question*

plausibility*
bias
enthymeme*
premise*
ad hominem
message
*non sequitur**
anecdote*
assertion
justification

practicality
credibility
pathos*
syllogism*
exigence*
precedent*
circular reasoning*
advocacy*
adherent *
cause/effect

proposal
accountability
ethos*
deduction*
speaker
testimonial*
bandwagon*
rhetoric*
red herring*

Singular		plural		
		...	we	...
first person	I			
second person	you	...	you	...
third person	he, she, it	...	they	...