

# Pump up Your Writing with Stronger Words

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Writing is an arduous task. If you're anything like me, you require a number of tools – coffee, cold water, loud music, quick access to an AP Stylebook and the internet, a window to stare out – and that's just the sitting-down-and-getting-started part. The actual putting-words-to-paper part takes much longer.

A lot of people don't like to write, because it's not that easy. But you can employ a few best practices to great benefit, and one of those is to use stronger words.

When used well, strong words perk up your copy and hammer home the points you're trying to make. Check out these handy-dandy tips.

**Tip: Avoid “very”; instead, use a stronger descriptor.**

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Weak:

She was very sad.

Strong:

She was heartbroken.

She was bereft.

She was devastated.

All of those adjectives are along the same lines as “sad,” but each means something slightly different, and conveys much more meaning in a sentence that’s actually shorter than the original.

**Tip: When possible, replace adverbs with a stronger verb.**

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Weak:

She ran quickly toward the door.

Strong:

She dashed toward the door.

She sprinted toward the door.

Adverbs have their place, but if you’re using them to prop up a weak or boring verb, scrap ‘em. And if you’re stuck, remember: A thesaurus is your friend.

**Tip: Substitute a stronger verb for the main “to be” verb when possible.**

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Weak:

I am going to write my article soon.

**Strong:**

I vow to start my article soon.

I promise to start my article soon.

When you’re competing for the attention span of a busy audience (i.e., everyone these days), one of the best ways of grabbing and keeping a reader is to use better verbs to replace the boring “to be” ones.

**Tip: Eliminate needless words and redundancies: “in order to”; “in the process of”; “actually”; “the fact that”; etc.**

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Weak:

The fact that you were late made me question your eligibility.

Strong:

Your tardiness made me question your eligibility.

Get to the point, right? We have to read half the first sentence before we even get into the meat of the idea, and nobody has time for that.

The whole point of stronger words is to keep your reader hooked as you make your points – but remember, you can overuse them, too. Don't sacrifice readability for jazz or get too thesaurus-crazy. The purpose of business writing is to ensure your reader leaves understanding the ideas you've presented, and too many flowery words can have the opposite effect.

Improving any skill is often a series of small steps. Use these simple tips to pump up your writing, and you'll be on the right track.