

SUPPLEMENTAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION

WR.2.C INFORMATIVE

Working with Words

Lessons WR.2.A–G offer direct instruction on discrete skills and should be implemented between Lessons 10 and 11. Students may benefit from some or all of the instruction in these lessons; only those lessons or activities that address student needs should be implemented.

Introduction

This lesson is composed of two distinct but related activities that center on skills for implementing effective word choice to improve informative writing. Each activity may last an entire class period.

Writing Instruction Options:

- Word Choice
- Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

In this lesson, the teacher provides direct instruction to students on using precise and specific words to improve their informative writing. Instruction also includes work with dictionaries and thesauruses to help students accurately convey thoughtful and complex ideas. Students focus on revising their own informative drafts for word choice before transitioning to a peer discussion of revisions. Student learning is assessed via the completion of the WR.2 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words, on which each student records one example of a successful revision.

For homework, students choose three different passages from their informative papers and revise each passage focusing on effectively incorporating word choice. Students also write a few sentences explaining whether they will keep the revisions they drafted and the impact this decision has on their informative papers.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
W.9-10.2.d	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

	d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.
W.9-10.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.9-10.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
SL.9-10.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Assessment

Assessment(s)
<p>Student learning is assessed via completion of the WR.2 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words. Students record the original passage from their informative papers as well as the revised passage. Students then explain why the revision is effective.</p> <p>① Consider assessing these revisions using the Informative Writing Checklist.</p>
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record the original passage (e.g., Americans did not have a lot of money, so they had some difficulty paying for things.). Revise the original passage, focusing on precise and specific word choices (e.g., Without a paycheck or savings, many Americans struggled to meet their basic needs.). Explain why the revision is effective (e.g., I used more precise words to highlight the fact that Americans did not have money coming in or money to fall back on. The precise words show how Americans could not pay for the most basic necessities, not extra goods.). <p>① See the Model WR.2 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words for more examples.</p>

Lesson Agenda/Overview



Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: W.9-10.2.d, W.9-10.5, W.9-10.6, SL.9-10.1 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Lesson Agenda Homework Accountability Writing Instruction Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word Choice Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus Informative Writing Checklist Individual Revision Revision Discussion WR.2 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5% 0% 30% 5% 30% 20% 5% 5%

Materials

- Student copies of the up-to-date Informative Writing Checklist (refer to WR.2 Lesson B Model Informative Writing Checklist)
- Copies of the WR.2 Revision Exit Slip: _____ for each student (refer to WR.2 Lesson A)—students will need additional blank copies
- One dictionary or thesaurus for each pair or small group of students (online or print copies)

Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
►	Indicates student action(s).

	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda. In this lesson, students learn how to incorporate precise and specific words into their writing or use dictionaries and thesauruses to strengthen word choice in their informative writing. Students revise their own drafts before participating in a peer discussion of their individual revisions.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

0%

- ① Students will be held accountable for homework during Activity 6: Revision Discussion.

Activity 3: Writing Instruction Options

30%

- ① Based on student need, select from the two options below:
 - Word Choice (See Appendix 1)
 - Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus (See Appendix 2)

Activity 4: Informative Writing Checklist

5%


- ① The following activity addresses the expectations of SL.9–10.1.

Instruct students to take out their copies of the Informative Writing Checklist.

- ① Consider posting or projecting the Informative Writing Checklist.

Instruct students to Think, Pair, Share about the following questions:

Based on this lesson’s writing instruction, what items should the class add to the Informative Writing Checklist? In which categories do these items belong and why?

-  Student responses will vary but should include points that address the following:
 - Use precise language to clearly explain the topic? This item belongs in the Coherence, Organization, and Style category, because precise language helps explain topics more clearly, which contributes to coherence and style.

- Use domain-specific vocabulary to clearly explain the topic? This item belongs in the Coherence, Organization, and Style category, because specific vocabulary helps explain topics more clearly, which contributes to coherence and style.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Guide students to a consensus on what items the class will add to the Informative Writing Checklist and in which category each item belongs. Instruct students to add the new items in the appropriate categories to their copies of the Informative Writing Checklist.

- ▶ Students add new items in the appropriate categories to their copies of the Informative Writing Checklist.

① Consider adding the new items in the appropriate categories to the displayed copy of the Informative Writing Checklist.

Activity 5: Individual Revision

30%

Instruct students to independently revise their drafts focusing on whichever of the following writing skills they learned in this lesson:

- Word Choice
- Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

① For example, if students completed the writing instruction activity on Word Choice, then their revisions will focus on word choice rather than on using a dictionary or thesaurus.

Explain to students that they should revise at least three passages to ensure that they have included precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to clearly explain the topic. Remind students to refer to the Informative Writing Checklist as they revise their drafts.

Transition to individual revision.

- ▶ Students independently revise the drafts of their informative papers to include precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to clearly explain the topic.
- 🗣 For sample revisions, see the Model WR.2 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words.

Activity 6: Revision Discussion

20%

① The following activity addresses the expectations of SL.9-10.1.

Instruct students to form pairs or small groups to share at least one of the passages they revised during the previous activity and one passage they revised during the previous lesson's homework assignment.

Explain to students that in addition to receiving feedback on their revisions, this discussion is also an opportunity to consider how they can use similar revisions or try similar techniques as their peers in their own papers. In this discussion, students provide brief constructive criticism to their peers. Remind students that constructive criticism helps them share advice with their peers in a positive and academic manner.

① Refer to Lesson 8 for a discussion of constructive criticism.

Instruct students to follow these steps to complete the revision discussion:

1. Show your peers the original passage and the revised passage.
 2. Explain to your peers how the revision improves your draft.
 3. Ask your peers to provide brief constructive criticism on your revisions.
 - ▶ Students share and discuss with peers at least two effective revisions they made to their drafts.
- ① In lessons that include the Revision Discussion, consider maintaining the same peer pairs or small groups for several lessons, so that students can benefit from a reviewer who is familiar with their drafts.

Activity 7: Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words

5%

Explain that for this lesson’s assessment, students record and explain one example of a successful revision. Distribute blank copies of the WR.2 Revision Exit Slip: _____ to each student. Instruct students to fill in the title “Working with Words” on their exit slips. Instruct students to complete the exit slip independently. Inform students that their revisions will be assessed with the Informative Writing Checklist.

- See the High Performance Response and Model WR.2 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words for sample student responses.

Activity 8: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to choose three different passages from their drafts. For each passage, students revise their drafts focusing on whichever of the following writing skills they learned in this lesson:

- Word Choice
- Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following questions for each revision:

Will you keep the revision you drafted? Why or why not?

Explain the impact of your decision on your informative paper.

① If an online writing community has been established for the class, instruct students to post their revised drafts for sharing with peers and/or assessment. (Students' use of the online writing community addresses the expectations of W.9-10.6.)

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Choose three different passages from your draft. For each passage, revise your draft focusing on whichever of the following writing skills you learned in this lesson:

- Word Choice
- Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Respond briefly in writing to the following questions for each revision:

Will you keep the revision you drafted? Why or why not?

Explain the impact of your decision on your informative paper.

Model Informative Writing Checklist

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: Use this template to record the checklist items that convey the components of an effective informative paper established as a class.

Command of Evidence Does my response...	Drafting ✓	Finalization ✓
Use relevant and sufficient evidence to develop my subtopics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrate evidence (quotations and paraphrasing) to support the claim and develop subtopics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipate and address the audience's knowledge level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Coherence, Organization, and Style Does my response...	Drafting ✓	Finalization ✓
Clearly introduce a topic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a precise claim about the topic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include subtopics that develop the topic and support the claim?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adapt content and language to my specific audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearly state each subtopic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have an introduction that engages the reader's attention and interest?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide a conclusion that follows from and supports the informative paper?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use precise language to clearly explain the topic?*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use domain-specific vocabulary to clearly explain the topic?*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Control of Conventions	Drafting	Finalization
Does my response...	✓	✓
Cite sources using proper MLA style and formatting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use proper punctuation for quotations and citations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Asterisks indicate new items added in this lesson.

Model WR.2 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: In the first column, record the original passage from your informative paper. In the second column, record the revised passage. In the third column, explain why the revision is effective.

Original Passage	Revised Passage	Explanation
With widespread and long-lasting effects, the Great Depression ruined Americans' livelihoods, yet it also drove them to be creative and use government assistance to survive.	With widespread and long-lasting effects, the Great Depression ruined Americans' livelihoods, yet it also drove them to be resourceful and use government assistance to survive.	I replaced "creative" with the word "resourceful" to better highlight how Americans had to find different ways of providing for themselves because of their financial situations.
Americans did not have a lot of money, so they had some difficulty paying for things.	Without a paycheck or savings, many Americans struggled to meet their basic needs.	I used more precise words to highlight the fact that Americans did not have money coming in or money to fall back on. The precise words show how Americans could not pay for the most basic necessities, not extra goods. Also, the words "paycheck" and "savings" are more concrete and easier to picture than "did not have a lot of money."
Without money from a job, many people could no longer pay to live in their homes, and were made to live in the street.	Lacking an income, many people could no longer afford to live in their homes, and were forced into the street.	I used a thesaurus to replace some of the words with words that have a more negative connotation to emphasize how much Americans were suffering.

Appendix 1: Word Choice

Post or project the following examples of a sentence that includes specific words and phrases and one that does not.

- ① Example 1 is taken from paragraph 2 of the article “The New Deal” (refer to Lesson 3). Example 2 has been modified from the article.
- **Example 1:** A desperate Congress gave Roosevelt carte blanche and rubber-stamped his proposals in order to expedite the reforms.
- **Example 2:** Congress allowed Roosevelt to do what he wanted in order to make changes happen more quickly.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with the vocabulary in the first example, remind them of the definitions for *carte blanche*, *rubber-stamped*, and *expedite* from Lesson 3 that are on their copies of text or in their vocabulary journals.

Instruct students to Think, Pair, Share about the following questions:

Which of these examples most effectively uses precise language? Why is the language more effective in this example?

💬 Student responses may include:

- The first example uses precise language more effectively. The word “desperate” conveys the dire situation of the American economy and contributes to an understanding of the willingness of Congress to “rubber-stamp[] proposals.”
- The word of “expedite” shows that Congress allowed Roosevelt to speed up the process of passing proposals because the situation was so desperate.
- The precise words in the first example explain how bad the problem was and exactly what Congress and Roosevelt did to try to solve it.
- The second example does not include any precise language, and a reader without any background knowledge of Roosevelt or the New Deal would not necessarily understand what Roosevelt did.

Which of these examples most effectively uses domain-specific vocabulary? Why is the vocabulary more effective in this example?

💬 Student responses may include:

- The first example uses words like “carte blanche,” “rubber-stamped,” “proposals,” and “reforms.” These words have specific contextual meaning in politics.

- The use of domain-specific words helps readers understand the specific steps Congress and Roosevelt took to try to help resolve a desperate situation: Congress gave Roosevelt permission to do whatever he wanted without needing its approval, so he could pass laws to begin changes in government.
- The second example does not explain the details of what Congress and Roosevelt did to make changes.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Provide students with the following definition: *domain-specific vocabulary* means “words that are unique to a certain content area or subject.”

- ▶ Students write the definition of *domain-specific vocabulary* in the appropriate section of their vocabulary journals.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Then explain to students that using precise words and domain-specific vocabulary can help convey the complexity of a topic and make a complex topic seem simpler or easier for the reader to understand. Explain to students that they should use precise words and domain-specific vocabulary throughout their papers.

Post or project the following example sentence.

- Americans did not have a lot of money, so they had some difficulty paying for things.

Instruct students to work in pairs or small groups to replace the imprecise or unspecific words and phrases with more precise and specific ones. Instruct students to also explain why replacing imprecise or unspecific words and phrases makes the sentence more effective.

- 💬 Student responses will vary but should demonstrate students’ ability to replace the words and phrases “a lot of,” “some,” and “things” with more specific words and phrases. A possible student response:

- Without a paycheck or savings, many Americans struggled to meet their basic needs.
- This revised sentence highlights the fact that Americans did not have money coming in or money to fall back on. It also conveys how Americans could not pay for the most basic necessities, not extra goods.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider identifying the words and phrases “a lot of,” “some,” and “things” for students to practice replacing.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Explain to students that “precise” and “specific” do not necessarily mean more words or longer sentences. Explain that sometimes writers can inadvertently weaken their writing by adding imprecise or nonspecific descriptive words.

Post or project the following paragraph and instruct students to Think, Pair, Share about the questions below.

- Although the Great Depression forced many Americans to rely on their own resources, it sort of encouraged people to use the government assistance offered through President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal programs. As the newly elected president in 1932, Roosevelt worked with Congress almost right away to create the New Deal programs “to relieve poverty, reduce unemployment, and speed economic recovery” (“The New Deal”). Most people everywhere faced a lot of economic difficulty and turned to the government to get a little support during the challenging times of the Great Depression.

What words or phrases seem weak or vague in this passage?

💬 Student responses should include:

- “sort of”
- “almost”
- “most people everywhere”
- “a lot of”
- “a little”

How do these words and phrases weaken the paragraph?

💬 These words and phrases are not specific or precise. The words suggest that the ideas are not fully supported by sources or that the writer does not have a full understanding of the information.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Explain to students that words that increase emphasis (e.g., “a lot of”) or decrease emphasis (e.g., “sort of,” “a little”) can be avoided by using more specific nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

Explain to students that in order to make appropriate word choices in their writing, they must have an understanding of connotation, as well as the explicit or primary meaning of the word. Explain to students that *connotation* refers to the feelings associated with a word. Provide students with the following example: The words “cheap” and “inexpensive” both describe something that does not cost a lot of money. The connotation of “inexpensive” suggests this same meaning, but the connotation of “cheap” implies that the object is also of low quality.

- ▶ Students write the definition of *connotation* in the appropriate section of their vocabulary journals.

Post or project the following examples and ask students to Think, Pair, Share about the questions below:

① Example 1 is taken from paragraph 3 of the Model Informative Paper (refer to Lesson 10). Example 2 has been modified from the model.

- **Example 1:** The Great Depression’s difficult economic conditions forced people to become more resourceful in order to survive.
- **Example 2:** The Great Depression’s complicated economic conditions encouraged people to become more creative in order to live.

How are the examples similar and different?

💬 Student responses may include:

- Both sentences are about the challenge people faced because of the economic situation during the Great Depression and how people had to act differently in their lives in order to make it through hard times.
- The sentences use different words to describe the same situation. The first sentence includes the words “difficult,” “forced,” “resourceful,” and “survive,” but the second example includes the words “complicated,” “encouraged,” “creative,” and “live.”

Which example is more effective? How does connotation contribute to the effectiveness of this example?

💬 Student responses may include:

- While both “difficult” and “complicated” have similar meanings, “difficult” is more appropriate in this context because it has a more negative connotation.
- While both “forced” and “encouraged” have similar meanings, “forced” has a stronger, more negative connotation and better conveys the seriousness of the situation.
- While both “resourceful” and “creative” have similar meanings, “resourceful” works better in this context because its connotation is more desperate: people who are resourceful are creative in how they use their resources when they do not have much to work with.
- While both “survive” and “live” have similar meanings, “survive” has a more desperate connotation. People who survive are just barely living or have just gotten through a tough or desperate moment.
- The first sentence includes words with stronger, more negative connotations, so it better conveys the desperation of the people and the seriousness of their situation.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Appendix 2: Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Instruct students to form pairs or small groups. Explain to students that as they try to remove imprecise and nonspecific words from their writing, they may want to consult a dictionary or thesaurus to find powerful, specific words to incorporate in a way that makes their writing more sophisticated and compelling. Explain to students that they can use dictionary definitions to rework sentences and phrases in their writing, and they can use thesauruses to replace words with synonyms. Remind students that just because a word appears as a synonym in a thesaurus or dictionary, it may not necessarily be the right fit for the context of the writing, and they should consider the connotation of the words in context.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If necessary, explain to students that *connotation* refers to the feelings associated with a word. Provide students with the following example: The words “cheap” and “inexpensive” both describe something that does not cost a lot of money. The connotation of “inexpensive” suggests this same meaning, but the connotation of “cheap” implies that the object is also of low quality.

- ▶ Students write the definition of *connotation* in the appropriate section of their vocabulary journals.

Explain to students that with the correct use of dictionaries and thesauruses, they have the opportunity to expand not just their written vocabulary but also their active vocabulary, which they use on an everyday basis.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If necessary, explain to students that dictionaries generally provide definitions and synonyms of words, whereas thesauruses generally only provide synonyms. Students who need both definition and synonym suggestions should consult a dictionary. Consider explaining that the dictionary and thesauruses each classify words by parts of speech, so students should ensure that they are looking up the correct part of speech for the word, based on the context in which it appears.

Encourage students to use credible online dictionaries like <http://dictionary.com> and <http://learnersdictionary.com> as well as an online thesaurus like <http://www.thesaurus.com> as they adapt their vocabulary.

- ① Consider explaining the benefits of online dictionaries and thesauruses as they allow students to quickly and easily access definitions and synonyms.

Post or project the following example sentence.

- Without money from a job, many people could no longer pay to live in their homes, and were made to live in the street.

Instruct student pairs or small groups to consult a dictionary and/or a thesaurus to determine which words or phrases in the sentence can be replaced to strengthen the accuracy and effectiveness of the sentence.

- Student responses may vary but should demonstrate students' ability to use a dictionary or thesaurus to make writing more precise or specific. Possible student responses include:
- The word “without” can be replaced by “lacking” which has a more negative connotation and works better to describe this sad situation.
 - The phrase “money from a job” can be replaced by “income” because it is more specific and a better word for an academic paper.
 - The word “pay” can be replaced by “afford” because it is more precise and makes more sense in this context.
 - The word “made” can be replaced by “forced” because it has a stronger, more negative connotation.
 - The word “live” is used twice in the sentence; the second time it can be replaced by “survive” because it has a more desperate connotation.

Instruct students to record different ways to revise the example sentence with the words or phrases they identified in the dictionary and/or thesaurus.

- Student responses may vary but should demonstrate students' ability to use a dictionary or thesaurus to make writing more precise or specific. Possible student response:
- Lacking an income, many people could no longer afford to live in their homes, and were forced to survive in the street.

- ① The possible student response above is taken from paragraph 2 of the Model Informative Paper (refer to Lesson 10).
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students have little experience using a thesaurus or dictionary, explain the steps of replacing words: first students identify words in the sentence that seem nonspecific or imprecise (*without, job, pay, made, live*). Then students look up each word in the dictionary or thesaurus and choose more precise or powerful words. Explain to students that they must choose words that they understand, so they can be sure they have the correct meaning and connotation. Students can check the meaning of words in a dictionary. Consider modeling this process with the word *without* in the sentence above.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Then post or project the students' suggested versions of the same sentence and lead a discussion comparing the original sentence with their suggested revisions.

Instruct students to discuss how each of the more specific words impacts the meaning or emphasis of the sentence. For example, ask:

How does the word “forced” impact the meaning or emphasis of the sentence?

- The word “forced” adds strength to the sentence because the word has a stronger and more negative connotation. It shows that people did not choose to leave their homes; they were so poor that they were “forced” to leave.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.