

Ideas for journal, revision, or mini-lessons for Word Choice

Idea #1:

Use the following verbs in any way you wish:

Racket Snug Green Spoon Boggle Snake

They're not all verbs, you say?

1. Jeremy is ricketing across the lawn as we speak!
2. Can you hear earthworms snugging out of the ground as the sun greens the trees?

It's not always the word that makes a verb; it is HOW it is used in the sentence.

Idea #2:

One way to enliven your prose is to avoid the use of the verb *to be*: am, are, is, was, were, etc. Often you can trace a dull passage to the overuse of that pesky verb. Study these examples:

When she finally emerged from the house, Mary was stunned. The sun was blinding, but the weather was cold. All around her were frozen trees that had broken off at their waists. Everything was both beautiful and awful.

Eliminating the verb *to be* forces you to think about your method of expression, often yielding a more poetic and precise passage:

Mary emerged from the house, stunned by a blinding sun. The trees, broken off at their waists, lay over the yard, each naked branch encased in a sleeve of ice. The day felt both beautiful and awful.

Idea #3:

When revising, don't forget to examine your modifiers. Do you have adverbs holding up weak verbs? Would a more muscular verb render the adverb unnecessary?

Gordon walked quickly across the yard.

Depending on Gordon's state of mind, he could be *scurrying*, *hurrying*, or *sprinting*.

DeeDee danced awkwardly to the music.

The precise nature of DeeDee's crummy dancing might be clearer if you replaced danced awkwardly with *twitched*, *shuddered* or *lurched*.