

AP English Language & Composition

Rhetorical Terminology

Focus: Diction

Diction: word choice, general character of the language used by the author. Words have three levels to them and are selected based on their efficiency in three areas:

1. Appearance
2. Sound
3. Meaning (who uses the word?; where is the word used?; why is the word used?)

Levels of Articulation/Diction:

<p>Non-Standard Language: <i>deficient in some form or manner</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulgarity: coarse, base, lacks refinement • Slang: vernacular language used for humor or exaggeration (ex: chick, dude, etc.) • Colloquial: regional language; differs in usage, connotation, and pronunciation (ex: you all = y'all) • Jargon: specific language for a field/profession (ex: chip, byte, CPU = computer field) • Cliché: figurative language used so often that it has lost its freshness and clarity (ex: "bigger and better," "loomed on the horizon," "jumped for joy," "quick as a flash," "toots his own horn") 	<p>Informal/Standard Language: <i>language grammatically correct, but conversational</i></p>	<p>Formal (Literate): <i>Language appropriate for more formal occasions, often more abstract</i></p>
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Types of Diction:

<p><i>Euphonious:</i> pleasant sounding EX: pillow</p>	VERSUS	<p><i>Cacophonous:</i> harsh sounding EX: awkward</p>
<p><i>Literal:</i> accurate language without embellishment EX: frugal</p>	VERSUS	<p><i>Figurative (cliché):</i> comparative language for a pictorial effect EX: tight as bark on a tree</p>
<p><i>Denotative:</i> language with exact meaning EX: dress, obese</p>	VERSUS	<p><i>Connotative:</i> language with suggested emotional meaning (with both positive and negative impacts) EX: gown, plump</p>
<p><i>Objective:</i> Language impersonal, unemotional, unbiased</p>	VERSUS	<p><i>Subjective:</i> Language that is personal, has emotion (pathos), and bias</p>
<p><i>Active:</i> States action EX: the students made progress</p>	VERSUS	<p><i>Passive:</i> States being EX: progress was made by the students <i>**passive is used when the author wants to remain vague or to conceal information**</i></p>
<p><i>Concrete:</i> Language is specific; tangible (things, facts) EX: girl, flag</p>	VERSUS	<p><i>Abstract:</i> Language that is conceptual, philosophical (ideas) EX: beauty, patriotism</p>
<p><i>Hyperbole (overstated):</i> Language deliberate at misrepresenting as more EX: "the shot heard 'round the world"</p>	VERSUS	<p><i>Understated:</i> Language has a deliberate misrepresenting as less EX: "I was only doing my job"</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Pedestrian:</i> Language of the common layman EX: cool <i>**most common used type of diction on the AP exam. That does not mean you should immediately just say "pedestrian"***</i></p>	VERSUS	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Pedantic:</i> Language inflated to display importance EX: urbane/suave <i>**you cannot say it is pedantic if the language is more elevated than what you are used to using... that's superficial**</i></p>

Devices of Sound:

- **Assonance:** Repetition of similar vowel sound in closely associated words (full rhyme) – *No pain, no gain.*
- **Consonance:** Repetition of similar consonant sound in closely associated words (half rhyme) – *Each slow dusk is a drawing down of blinds.*
- **Alliteration:** repetition of initial consonant sound in closely associated words – *The twisting trout twinkled below.*
- **Onomatopoeia:** Words whose pronunciations suggests its meaning – *buzz*

****Never are you allowed to say that “that the author uses a lot of diction”**

****Whenever the word “diction” is used, it must be accompanied by an adjective to describe what kind of diction.**

Hints for Success:

1. Avoid the “list and label” trap. It is not sufficient to simply say that the author uses “cacophonous diction” – you must provide examples of this type of diction from the text. Then, you must fully analyze the function of that specific type of diction!
2. Remember to distinguish between the author’s purpose, tone, and attitude!
 - a. Purpose: what the author is attempting to achieve through the writing of the text
 - b. Tone: the feeling evoked by the language; closely linked with author’s attitude and purpose, but not necessarily the same! Any human emotion can become the author’s tone.
 - c. Attitude: the author’s personal viewpoints on the topic; tone reflects the author’s attitude!
3. Read the passage several times before beginning your composition!
4. Choose descriptors for diction that are true and accurate... avoid identifying “fancy” or impressive descriptors without having a decent reason to do so!
5. Be sure to distinguish DICTION and other stylistic elements such as figurative language.
6. Attempt to move way from superficial terms: positive/negative. Dig deeper, and always push yourself to go farther with your analysis.

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Focus: Tone

Tone is the way in which the TEXT reflects the writer's or speaker's attitude toward the subject at hand.

- Tone can be challenging in prose and poetry because the reader does not have voice inflection to obscure or to carry meaning.
- An appreciation of word choice, details, imagery, and language all contribute to TONE.

AP Lesson: **To misinterpret tone is to misinterpret the meaning.**

- Tone is developed through diction. Remember – to get to tone, you have to identify and address the diction of the author.
- Often, students *mix up* diction with tone. Tone is a “feeling”, you immediately try to negate word choice as something similar. They are closely related...
 - Satire, for instance, is not identified by its word choice. It's identified by the author's attitude (“tone”).

TONE VOCABULARY

Angry	Sad	Sentimental	Afraid
Sharp	Cold	Fanciful	Detached
Upset	Urgent	Complimentary	Contemptuous
Silly	Joking	Condescending	Happy
Boring	Poignant	Sympathetic	Confused
Apologetic	Hollow	Childish	Humorous
Joyful	Peaceful	Horrific	Allusive
Mocking	Sarcastic	Sweet	Objective
Nostalgic	Vexed	Vibrant	Zealous
Tired	Frivolous	Irrelevant	Bitter
Audacious	Benevolent	Dreamy	Shocking
Seductive	Restrained	Somber	Candid
Proud	Giddy	Pitiful	Dramatic
Proactive	Didactic	Lugubrious (aka: mournful)	Pompous

There are two ways to find tone.

Option #1: Circle the verbs.

Pro: The verbs indicate a quick pattern that makes tone easily discernible; also, identifies the tone shifts much faster.

Con: Mistakes due to “skimming”; also, you have to really understand verbs

Option #2: DIDLSS (see below)

Pro: Very effective, and when done completely, usually leads to a very accurate analysis

Con: Takes some time (not a lot), which leads to paranoia about “the ticking clock” which leads to a rushed analysis

DIDLSS (pronounced DIE-DILLS or DID-ILLS)

- **Diction:** The *connotation* of the word choice
 - What words does the author choose?
 - Consider his/her word choice compared to another. Why did the author choose *that* particular word?
 - What are the connotations of that word choice?
- **Images:** Vivid appeals to understanding through the senses... look for concrete language that appeals to the senses.
 - What images does the author use?
 - What does he/she focus on in a sensory (sight, touch, taste, smell, etc.) way?
 - The kinds of images the author puts in or leaves out reflect his/her style? Are they vibrant? Prominent? Plain?
 - NOTE: Images differ from detail in the degree in which they appeal to the senses.

- **Details:** *Facts* that are included or those that are omitted. Details are facts or fact-lets. They differ from images in that they don't have a strong sensory appeal. The use of vivid descriptions or figures of speech that appeal to sensory experiences helps to create the author's *tone*. Details are most commonly the *facts* given by the author/speaker as support for the attitude or tone. The speaker's perspective shapes what details are given and which are not.
 - What details does the author choose to include?
 - What do they imply?
 - What does the author choose to exclude?
 - What are the connotations of their choice of details?
 - Examples:
 - My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun. → restrained
 - An old, man, blind, despised, and dying king. → somber, candid
 - He clasp the crag with crooked hands. → dramatic
 - Love sets you going like a fat gold watch. → fanciful
 - Smiling, the boy fell dead. → shocking
- **Language:** The *overall* use of language, such as formal, clinical, jargon, etc. Like word choice, the language of a passage has control over tone. Consider language to be the entire body of words used in a text, not simply isolated bits of diction.
 - What is the overall impression of the language the author uses?
 - Does it reflect education? A particular profession? Intelligence? Is it plain? Ornate? Clear? Simple? Figurative? Poetic?
 - Examples:
 - An invitation to a wedding might use formal language, while a biology text would use scientific and clinical language.
 - When I told Dad that I had goofed the exam, he blew his top. → slang
 - I had him on the ropes in the fourth and if one of my short rights had connected, he'd have gone down for the count. → jargon
 - A close examination and correlation of the most reliable current economic indexes justifies the conclusion that the next year will witness a continuation of the present, upward market trend. → pedantic
- **Sentence Structure:** How structure reflects the author's tone and ensuing attitude
 - What are the sentences like? Are they simple with one or two clauses?
 - Do they have multiple phrases?
 - Are they choppy? Flowing? Sinuous like a snake?
 - What emotional impression do they leave?

Broad overview of syntax in relation with tone:

- Parallel syntax (similarly styled phrases and sentences) creates interconnected emotions, feelings and ideas.
 - Short sentences are punchy and intense. Often emphatic, passionate, or flippant.
 - Long sentences are distancing, reflective and more abstract. Suggests greater thought.
 - Loose sentences point at the end. Periodic sentences point at the beginning, followed by modifiers and phrases.
 - The inverted order of an interrogative sentence cues the reader to a question and creates tension between the speaker and listener.
- **Shift in Tone:** Good authors are *rarely* monotone. A speaker's attitude can **shift on a topic...** Or an author might have **one attitude** toward one audience and **another toward the subject**.
 - Clues to watch for shifts in tone:
 - Key words (but, yet, nevertheless, however, although)
 - Punctuation (dashes, periods, colons)
 - Paragraph divisions
 - Changes in sentence length
 - Sharp contrasts in diction
 - It doesn't change the *type* of diction, but it relates to our tone.

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Focus: Syntax

Syntax: The grammatical structure of sentences; the deliberate sentence structure the author chooses to make his or her desired point. By examining the sentence structure, you are able to show how the structure contributes to and enhances meaning and effect.

- **Essential Idea:** Syntax must be examined as to how it contributes to and enhances meaning and effect.

First, you must recognize the difference between:

- Phrases = groups of related words without subject, predicate, or both
- Clauses = groups of related words with subject and predicate
 - ▶ Need a reminder what a subject is and what a predicate is? They are the two features that comprise a sentence. Consider the following statement: "Apples are red." The apple is the subject. Red modifies and describes what the apple is. Therefore, a subject is the main idea. While the predicate modifies thanks to a verb.

EIGHT WAYS TO ANALYZE AND APPROACH SYNTAX ANALYSIS

1. Sentence Length

- ▶ Staccato = one to two words, abrupt
- ▶ Telegraphic = shorter than five words
- ▶ Short = approx. 5-10 words
- ▶ Medium = approx. 15-20 words
- ▶ Long = 30 or more words

*While reading any passage/excerpt/text: consider the sentence length variety implemented into the writing.
How is it effective in dealing the idea of the work?*

2. Number of Sentences

3. Rhythm of Sentences

4. Sentence beginnings – variety or pattern. *Is there a good variety or does a pattern emerge?*

5. Voice – active or passive?

6. Arrangement of ideas

- ▶ Loose sentence (main point is at the beginning, it is "front loaded"):
 - ▶ Example: We reached Edmonton that morning after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences.
- ▶ Periodic sentence (main point at the end, "end loaded"):
 - ▶ Example: That morning, after a turbulent flight and some exciting purposes, we reached Edmonton.
- ▶ Parallel structure
- ▶ Antithesis
- ▶ Natural order (subject before main verb).
 - ▶ Example: Oranges grow in California.
- ▶ Inverted order (verb before subject).
 - ▶ Example: In California grow oranges.
- ▶ Split order (divides the predicate into two parts with the subject coming between).
 - ▶ Example: In California oranges grow.
- ▶ Interrupted sentences: subordinate clauses come in the middle, set off by dashes or commas
 - ▶ Example: These had been her teachers, -- stern and wild ones, -- and they had made her strong...

7. Sentence Types

- ▶ Declarative = statements. Example: The clock struck eight. She waited. Nobody came.
- ▶ Interrogative = ask a question
- ▶ Imperative = commands, requests. Example: Write to the local TV station. Try to convince others to take your side.
- ▶ Exclamatory = makes an exclamation
- ▶ Fragments and run-ons

8. Sentence structures

- ▶ Simple sentences = 1 subject, 1 predicate
 - ▶ EX: The price of gold rose.
- ▶ Compound sentences = two or more independent clauses joined with coordinating conjunctions, transitional words/phrases, semicolons, or colons
 - ▶ EX: The saxophone does not belong to the brass family; in fact, it is a member of the woodwind family.
- ▶ Complex sentences = one independent clause and one dependent clause
 - ▶ EX: After the town was evacuated, the hurricane began.
- ▶ Compound-complex sentences = two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent clause
 - ▶ EX: When small foreign imports began dominating the US automobile industry, consumers were very responsive, but American auto workers were dismayed

9. Word Order

- a. Are the words set out in a special way for a purpose or effect?

10. Rhetorical Question

- a. A question that expects no answer. It is used to draw attention to a point being made.

Ways to Think About Organization:

<u>Clarity</u> Lucid Explicit	<u>Obscurity</u> Obscure Vague Involuted	<u>Plainness</u> Unvarnished Severe Commonplace Unimaginative Sparse	<u>Embellishment</u> Ornate Flowery Turgid Bombastic Florid
<u>Conciseness</u> Brief Terse Laconic Succinct Sententious	<u>Diffuseness</u> Verbose Prolix Rambling Protracted Wordy Convoluted	<u>Elegance</u> Polished Classic Graceful Symmetrical Felicitous	<u>Inelegance</u> Graceless Vulgar Labored Ponderous Tasteless
<u>Vigor</u> Forceful Mordant Incisive Graphic Impassioned Trenchant	<u>Feebleness</u> Prosaic Unvaried Sketchy Weak Puerile Inferior Ineffective	<u>Conformity</u> Ordinary Commonplace Bromidic Exemplary	<u>Unconformity</u> Singular Amorphous Bizarre Extraordinary

Other ways to analyze or write about organization could use the following terms:

- Cause and effect
- Compare and contrast
- Spatial organization (organized around “where”): top to bottom/bottom to top, near to far/far to near, left to right/right to left
- Time organization (organized around “when”): first to last/last to first, most recent to most remote/most remote to most recent, then to now/now to then
- Simple to complex or complex to simple
- Order of importance
- Order of magnitude or degree
- Linear/narrative structure (like a story, from “once upon a time” to “happily ever after”)
- Extended metaphor
- Conceit
- Familiar to unfamiliar/unfamiliar to familiar
- Logical progression
- Association – how things are related