**18. SYNONYM AND ANTONYMS, PARALLELISM**

**Synonyms and Antonyms**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Recognize how synonyms improve writing.
2. Identify common antonyms to increase your vocabulary.

As you work with your draft, you will want to pay particular attention to the words you have chosen. Do they express exactly what you are trying to convey? Can you choose better, more effective words? Familiarity with synonyms and antonyms can be helpful in answering these questions.

**SYNONYMS**

Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an “easy task” or a “simple task” because *easy* and *simple* are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a “large city” or a “metropolis” because *city* and *metropolis* are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words *boring* and *insipid* may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affect the message your writing conveys. The word *insipid* evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than *boring*.

The English language is full of pairs of words that have subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, face the challenge of choosing the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, it comes across to your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

**WRITING AT WORK**

Any writing you do at work involves a careful choice of words. For example, if you are writing an e-mail to your employer regarding your earnings, you can use the word *pay*, *salary*, or hourly *wage*. There are also other synonyms to choose from. Just keep in mind that the word you choose will have an effect on the reader, so you want to choose wisely to get the desired effect.

**EXERCISE 1**

Replace the underlined words in the paragraph with appropriate synonyms. Write the new paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

When most people think of the Renaissance, they might think of artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, but they often overlook one of the very important figures of the Renaissance: Filippo Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi was born in Florence, Italy in 1377. He is considered the very best architect and engineer of the Renaissance. His impressive accomplishments are a testament to following one’s dreams, persevering in the face of obstacles, and realizing one’s vision.

The most difficult undertaking of Brunelleschi’s career was the dome of Florence Cathedral, which took sixteen years to construct. A major blow to the progress of the construction happened in 1428. Brunelleschi had designed a special ship to carry the one hundred tons of marble needed for the dome. He felt this would be the most inexpensive way to transport the marble, but the unthinkable happened. The ship went down to the bottom of the water, taking all the marble with it to the bottom of the river. Brunelleschi was really sad. Nevertheless, he did not give up. He held true to his vision of the completed dome. Filippo Brunelleschi completed construction of the dome of Florence Cathedral in 1446. His influence on artists and architects alike was felt strongly during his lifetime and can still be felt in this day and age.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**EXERCISE 2**

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym.

1. leave, abandon
2. mad, insane
3. outside, exterior
4. poor, destitute
5. quiet, peaceful
6. riot, revolt
7. rude, impolite
8. talk, conversation
9. hug, embrace
10. home, residence

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**ANTONYMS**

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. [Table 4.3 "Common Antonyms"](https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_writing-for-success/s08-05-synonyms-and-antonyms.html#fresh-ch04_s05_s02_t01) lists common words and their antonyms.

Table 4.3 Common Antonyms

| **Word** | **Antonym** |  | **Word** | **Antonym** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| absence | presence |  | frequent | seldom |
| accept | refuse |  | harmful | harmless |
| accurate | inaccurate |  | horizontal | vertical |
| advantage | disadvantage |  | imitation | genuine |
| ancient | modern |  | inhabited | uninhabited |
| abundant | scarce |  | inferior | superior |
| artificial | natural |  | intentional | accidental |
| attractive | repulsive |  | justice | injustice |
| borrow | lend |  | knowledge | ignorance |
| bravery | cowardice |  | landlord | tenant |
| create | destroy, demolish |  | likely | unlikely |
| bold | timid, meek |  | minority | majority |
| capable | incapable |  | miser | spendthrift |
| combine | separate |  | obedient | disobedient |
| conceal | reveal |  | optimist | pessimist |
| common | rare |  | permanent | temporary |
| decrease | increase |  | plentiful | scarce |
| definite | indefinite |  | private | public |
| despair | hope |  | prudent | imprudent |
| discourage | encourage |  | qualified | unqualified |
| employer | employee |  | satisfactory | unsatisfactory |
| expand | contract |  | tame | wild |
| forget | remember |  | vacant | occupied |

**Tip**

Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often helps us retain them.

**EXERCISE 3**

Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.

1. The pilot who landed the plane was a coward because no one was injured.
2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
3. My mother says it is impolite to say thank you like you really mean it.
4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given me ignorance.
5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!
6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.
7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.
8. Maria thinks elephants who live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.
9. The teacher filled her students’ minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.
10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

* Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word.
* Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of another word.
* Choosing the right synonym refines your writing.
* Learning common antonyms sharpens your sense of language and expands your vocabulary.

**WRITING APPLICATION**

Write a paragraph that describes your favorite dish or food. Use as many synonyms as you can in the description, even if it seems too many. Be creative. Consult a thesaurus, and take this opportunity to use words you have never used before. Be prepared to share your paragraph.