



Writing Skills

Linguistic Specificity

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Linguistic Specificity

Specific and descriptive writing is the expressive goal. Language impaired children frequently use non-specific words in their speech and in their writing. For example, one of the most common words my students use to express emotion is “upset”. I challenge my students to replace that word with a more specific emotion, such as “disappointed”, “sullen”, “outraged”, or “frustrated”. This straightforward exercise requires students to replace underlined non-specific terms, such as “good” and “people”, with specific adjectives and nouns in sentences. This worksheet lends itself well to group sessions and the classroom, because within group contexts students can hear several variations of replacements, and can evaluate the effectiveness of each. An answer key with multiple possible replacements is included.

Name _____

Date _____

BE SPECIFIC

In the following sentences, cross out the underlined words and replace them with more specific nouns and adjectives:

- 1) At the bakery I started drooling just looking at all the stuff _____.
- 2) I'm getting overwhelmed at school from all the stuff _____ my teachers give me to do.
- 3) On my next trip to Italy, I promise to bring you back some great things _____.
- 4) The people _____ at my job do not make enough money.
- 5) My dad doesn't think I'm putting in enough effort, and his feeling _____ makes me feel bad.
- 6) Weight Watchers is a good thing _____ that helps a lot of people.
- 7) I can't believe she betrayed me and it makes me so upset _____.
- 8) Because my son spent so many hours practicing, his performance at the spring concert was really good _____.
- 9) Being a good _____ parent requires putting your child's needs ahead of your own.
- 10) The movie was so bad _____ that I think I started snoring halfway through.
- 11) Things _____ like "all gay people are crazy" or "all snowboarders have a death wish" perpetuate terrible stereotypes.
- 12) My photos, postcards, train ticket stubs, and matchbooks are truly very important things _____ from my trip to Spain.
- 13) My people _____ helped me feel a lot better during my recovery.
- 14) All that stuff _____ is crammed into my head by my tutor.
- 15) He was really upset _____ when he saw her with his best friend.



BE SPECIFIC—Answer Key

(note: answers provided are suggestions; other answers may suffice)

In the following sentences, cross out the underlined words and replace them with more specific nouns and adjectives:

- 1) At the bakery I started drooling just looking at all the stuff (items, baked goods, pastries).
- 2) I'm getting overwhelmed at school from all the stuff (homework, assignments, work) my teachers give me to do.
- 3) On my next trip to Italy, I promise to bring you back some great things (souvenirs, gifts).
- 4) The people (coworkers, staff, workers) at my job do not make enough money.
- 5) My dad doesn't think I'm putting in enough effort, and his feeling (disappointment, frustration) makes me feel bad.
- 6) Weight Watchers is a good thing (organization, strategy) that helps a lot of people.
- 7) I can't believe she betrayed me and it makes me so upset (sad, broken-hearted).
- 8) Because my son spent so many hours practicing, his performance at the spring concert was really good (entertaining, professional, flawless).
- 9) Being a good (selfless, giving, loving, helpful) parent requires putting your child's needs ahead of your own.
- 10) The movie was so bad (boring, predictable) that I think I started snoring halfway through.
- 11) Things (Statements, Notions) like "all gay people are crazy" or "all snowboarders have a death wish" perpetuate terrible stereotypes.
- 12) My photos, postcards, train ticket stubs, and matchbooks are truly very important things (souvenirs, remembrances) from my trip to Spain.
- 13) My people (friends, family, siblings) helped me feel a lot better during my recovery.
- 14) All that stuff (information, knowledge) is crammed into my head by my tutor.
- 15) He was really upset (sad, angry, humiliated) when he saw her with his best friend.

