Writing

Concrete and Specific Language

Pace
Learning
Systems

Nothing Teaches Like Success®

Concrete and Specific Language

Lesson 230

Writing

Writing

Lesson 230 , Concrete and Specific Language

CW4230

To the Student

In this lesson you will learn about general and specific language. ***General language*** is vague and covers a broad subject area. Look at this statement:

The car was brown.

Specific language gives a clear-cut example. Look at this statement:

The Buick Skylark was brown.

In the specific language sentence, a particular car is mentioned. In the general language sentence, you have no idea what kind of car the writer is talking about.

Look at the list below. It starts with a general category and becomes more and more specific.

People
Women (Are a specific type of person)
Women who are celebrities (Are a specific type of woman)
Actresses (Are a specific type of female celebrity)
Michelle Pfeiffer and Whoopi Goldberg (Are two specific actresses)

Look at these sentences:

General:
I like some actresses.

Specific:
I like Michelle Pfeiffer and Whoopi Goldberg.

The specific sentence gives the reader more details.

You will also learn about abstract and concrete language. ***Abstract language*** names ideas, emotions, or conditions. Abstract words name things that you **can't** see, smell, touch, taste, or hear. Abstract words are words like love, freedom, and sorrow. ***Concrete language*** names things that you **can** see, smell, touch, taste, or hear.

In this book you will find numbered parts that are called Frames. Within these Frames you will answer many questions about general, specific, abstract, and concrete language. Write your answers on a separate piece of paper. Then look at the top of the next page in the book and check your answers.

If you use the book in this way, you will easily remember how to use general, specific, abstract, and concrete language in your writing. If you do not understand how to use this book, or if you need assistance with certain Frames, ask your instructor for help.

 Now turn the page and begin.

1. In this lesson, you will learn what general and specific language are and how to make general language more specific. You will also learn the difference between abstract and concrete language. Good writing will use all four types of language. General and abstract language should be supported by specific and concrete language. You will learn how to use the different types of language in the next lesson. First, you'll learn about general and specific language.

---

2. **General language** is language that is broad and covers a wide subject area. General language is not specific.

    Specific language is language that gives you particular examples.

    Look at the sentences below:

    > **General:**
    > Martin likes trees.
    >
    > **Specific:**
    > Martin likes maple trees.

    The general statement lets you know that Martin likes the general class **trees**. The specific statement lets you know Martin likes a certain type of tree.

---

3. _____ language tells you about particular examples.
    _____ language tells you about broad subjects and gives general information.

4. Look at the list of words below. The list begins with a general category and becomes more and more specific.

- Food (General Category)

- Breakfast foods (A particular type of food)

- Breakfast pastries (A particular type of breakfast food)

- Doughnuts and biscuits (A particular type of pastry)

Breakfast foods are more specific than **food**. However, **breakfast pastries** are more specific than **breakfast foods**. **Doughnuts** and **biscuits** are _____ (more/less) specific than **breakfast pastries**.

Breakfast foods are _____ (more/less) specific than doughnuts.

5. Cereal, muffins, and eggs are _____ (more/less) specific than breakfast foods.

6. When you write, "The dog slept in the grass," your reader will be able to picture a dog sleeping in the grass. However, the reader will not know what kind of dog is sleeping in the grass. You could use more specific language and say, "The cocker spaniel slept in the grass."

Cocker spaniel is _____ (more/less) specific than dog.

---

7. Look at this sentence:

   Herbert reads magazines on Saturday.

   The sentence above is in _____ language since we aren't told what magazines Herbert reads. A more specific word or group of words in place of magazines could tell us more about Herbert. It matters whether Herbert reads *Sports Illustrated* or *U.S. News and World Report* on Saturday. *Sports Illustrated* is _____ (more/less) specific than magazines.

---

8. Mark these two words with **S** for **specific** or **G** for **general**.

   natural material   _____
   cotton   _____

---

9. **Facial expressions** is _____ (general/specific). **Frowns and grins** are _____ (general/specific).

---

10. Mark these sentences with **S** for **specific** or **G** for **general**.

    Many different scents filled the room.   _____

    The smell of almond and vanilla filled the room.   _____

3

---

11. Sentence _____ tells readers what kind of sounds the house made.
    Sentence _____ is more specific.

    A The old house made **many strange sounds** in the night.

    B The old house made **creaks and moans** in the night.

---

12. Mark the words below with **S** for **specific** or **G** for **general**.

    A snacks   _____
          potato chips   _____

    B tulips   _____
          flowers   _____

    C emotion   _____
          fear   _____

13. Specific writing gives the names of things whenever possible. Look at these two sentences.

    A   Maria wore nail polish.

    B   Maria wore Disco Gold nail polish.

    Which sentence gives readers more information about Maria? _____

14. Which sentence below is more specific? _____

    A   The man bought the hamburger.

    B   Cedric bought the hamburger.

15. Look at these two sentences.

    A   Jonathan had many interesting books on his bookshelf.

    B   Jonathan had poetry, science, and religion books on his bookshelf.

    Which sentence above is more specific? _____

    Sentence _____ gives you more information about the kind of person Jonathan is.

5

16. Write the letter of the specific example in the blank in front of each general category.

A	chandeliers	_____	fabric
B	plaid sofa pillows	_____	wildflowers
C	denim	_____	light fixtures
D	dandelions	_____	decoration
E	Fruitloops	_____	cereal

17. Now you know what general and specific language are. Next, you will learn how to decide whether to use specific language or general language. You will also learn to rewrite general statements as specific statements.

18. Look at the sentence below:

   The dog ran around the corner.

   If you know what kind of dog it is, then you may want to be more specific. If the dog is a collie, you would say, "The collie ran around the corner."

   If you don't know what kind of dog it is, stay with the _____ (general/specific) statement "The dog ran around the corner."

19. If you can be more specific in your writing you should be. Look at this sentence:

> Many actors have played the role of James Bond in movies.

We can find out the names of the actors who have played James Bond. We can be more specific here. Choose the sentence below that is more specific than the one above. _____

    A   Sean Connery, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton, and Pierce Brosnan have played the role of James Bond in movies.

    B   A lot of actors have played the role of James Bond in movies over the years.

However, you may want the sentence above to be a general topic sentence.Then you will have other specific sentences that follow with information about each actor. This is how you should use general and specific language in your writing. General sentences should be supported by _____ (general/specific) details. When writing your detail sentences you should be as specific as you can. Remember, you will learn more about supporting general statements with specific details in the next lesson.

20. Look at this sentence:

> The class was incredibly nervous before their instructor handed out the test.

Now, choose the most specific sentence below. _____ The sentence you choose should give examples of what lets the writer know the class was nervous.

  A Before the instructor handed out the test, the class was remarkably tense and nervous.

  B The students in the class quieted and held their breath before the instructor handed out the test.

  C Before the instructor handed out the test, the class was extremely nervous and anxious.

21. Which sentence below is more specific than the sentence that follows? _____

> Marius listens to many different types of music.

  A Marius listens to a few different types of music.

  B Marius listens to rap, blues, classical, and jazz music.

22. Another way you can be more specific in your writing is by using adjectives to give more details about things. Let's look at this sentence again:

> The dog ran around the corner.

You may not know what kind of dog it is. However, you can describe its size and color. A **big, brown dog** is _____ (more/less) specific than a **dog**. You may want to be general. However, when you begin writing about details, the more specific you are, the stronger your writing will be.

23. Look at another sentence:

> The girl walked down the street as the sun began to set.

We don't know who this girl is. However, we can describe her with adjectives to make the sentence more specific. Look at the rewrite:

> With her hands in her pockets, the thin, red-haired girl walked down the street as the sun began to set.

This description gives the reader a clear picture of the girl as she walks down the street. It is _____ (more/less) specific than the original sentence.

24. Which sentence below is more **specific**? _____

   A   The house was the largest one on the block.

   B   The red brick house with the columns was the largest one on the block.

25. Which sentence below is more **general**? _____

   A   A car crashed into the garbage cans that were in the street.

   B   A red-and-black sports car crashed into the garbage cans that were in the street.

26. Many writers also think that if they use long words their writing will sound better. But, they may confuse their readers by using long words. Good writers use language that is easily understood by their readers. Look at the example below:

   Kendal **wagered** twenty dollars on the horse.

   The boldfaced word can be simplified. **Wagered** means **bet**. The sentence could be rewritten like this:

   Kendal _____ twenty dollars on the horse.

27. Long words may sometimes be pretentious words. **Pretentious words** are words that people use to sound smarter. Simple words are usually more specific and easier for your reader to understand. If your reader has an easy time understanding your language, your writing will be more effective. Look at the list of often-used pretentious words below. Beside each word is a simpler word that means the same thing and is easier for readers to understand.

Pretentious Words	**Simpler Words**
utilize	use
inquired	asked
facilitate	assist
to endeavor	to try
subsequent to	after
not operative	doesn't work
conversed	talked
in actuality	actually

The simpler words will help make your writing clearer and more _____ (general/specific).

28. Choose the word that would make a clearer sentence.

The Dixons have never _____ (owned/possessed) a car.

29. Choose the word that would make a clearer sentence.

    Concetta _____ (bought/purchased) five lottery tickets at the grocery store.

30. Choose the word that would make a clearer sentence.

    We _____ (conversed/talked) for hours.

31. Finally, you will learn about abstract language and concrete language.

    Abstract language names things that you **can't** see, feel, touch, taste, or hear. It names emotions, conditions, or ideas. Some examples of abstract words are **love**, **freedom**, **sorrow**, **justice**, and **joy**.

    Concrete language names things that you **can** see, feel, touch, taste, or hear. Some examples of concrete words are kiss, blue, dog, food, and smile.

32. You can hold **fruit** in your hand, so fruit is a(n) _____ (abstract/concrete) word.

33. You can't hold **happiness** in your hand, so happiness is a(n) _____ (abstract/concrete) word.

12

---

34. _____ language names things you can't detect with your senses.

    _____ language names things you can detect with your senses.

---

35. The word **fear** is _____ (abstract/concrete).

---

36. **Kindness** is a(n) _____ (abstract/concrete) word.

---

37. **Daffodil** is a(n) _____ (abstract/concrete) word.

---

38. The word **book** is _____ (abstract/concrete).

End of Lesson Sample

We appreciate your interest!

Contact Pace Learning Systems for more information or to request a physical sample of the complete lesson booklet.

You can now **build your own** custom Pace Learning System, choosing **from nearly 300 self-paced** tutorials in all core academic areas, from the 3rd Grade Reading Level to high school equivalency.

These specially-designed, **truly self-paced** instructional programs provide a **powerful tool for targeted remediation** with all major tests and standards, including TABE, CASAS, GED, HiSET and CCRS.

For more information on the curriculum that contains this lesson, visit us online or contact us any time.

800-826-7223

success@pacelearning.com

Nothing Teaches Like Success! ™