

DICTION, SYNTAX, AND VOICE

DICTION- Describe diction by considering the following:

1. Words may be **monosyllabic** (one syllable in length) or **polysyllabic** (more than one syllable in length). The higher the ratio of polysyllabic words, the more difficult the content.
2. Words may be mainly **colloquial** (slang), **informal** (conversational), **formal** (literary), or **old-fashioned**.
3. Words may be mainly **denotative** (containing an exact meaning), e.g. dress, or **connotative** (containing a suggested meaning), e.g., gown.
4. Words may be **concrete** (specific) or **abstract** (general).
5. Words may be **euphonious** (pleasant sounding), e.g., butterfly, or **cacophonous** (harsh sounding), e.g., pus.

SYNTAX- Describe the sentence structure by considering the following:

1. Examine the **sentence length**. Are the sentences **telegraphic** (shorter than five words in length), **medium** (approximately eighteen words in length), or **long and involved** (thirty words or more in length)? Does the sentence length fit the subject matter; what variety of lengths is present? Why is the sentence length effective?
2. Examine **sentence patterns**. Some elements to consider are listed below:
 - A. A **declarative** (assertive) sentence makes a statement, e.g., *The king is sick*. An **imperative** sentence gives a command, e.g., *Stand up*. An **interrogative** sentence asks a question, e.g., *Is the king sick?* An **exclamatory** sentence makes an exclamation, e.g., *The king is dead!*
 - B. A **simple sentence** contains one subject and one verb, e.g., *The singer bowed to her adoring audience*. A **compound sentence** contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinate conjunction (and, but, or) or by a semicolon, e.g., *The singer bowed to the audience, but she sang no encores*. A **complex sentence** contains an independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses, e.g., *You said that you would tell the truth*. A **compound-complex** sentence contains two or more principal clauses and one or more subordinate clauses, e.g., *The singer bowed while the audience applauded, but she sang no encores*.
 - C. A **loose sentence** makes complete sense if brought to a close before the actual ending, e.g., *We reached Edmonton /that morning /after a turbulent flight /and some exciting experiences*. A **periodic sentence** makes sense only when the end of the sentence is reached, e.g., *That morning, after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences, we reached Edmonton*.
 - D. In a **balanced sentence**, the phrases or clauses balance each other by virtue of their likeness or structure, meaning, and / or length, e.g., *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters*.
 - E. **Natural order of a sentence** involves constructing a sentence so the subject comes before the predicate, e.g., *Oranges grow in California*. **Inverted order** of a sentence (sentence inversion) involves constructing a sentence so the predicate comes before the subject, e.g., *In California grow oranges*. This is a device in which normal sentence patterns are reversed to create an emphatic or rhythmic effect. This is reversed to create an emphatic or rhythmic effect. **Split order of a sentence divides** the predicate into two parts with the subject coming in the middle, e.g., *In California oranges grow*.
 - F. **Juxtaposition** is a poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, creating an effect of surprise and wit, e.g., *The apparition of these faces in the crowd; /Petals on a wet, black bough* ("In a Station of the Metro" by Ezra Pound).

- G. **Parallel structure (parallelism)** refers to a grammatical or structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence. It involves an arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased, e.g., *He was walking, running, and jumping for joy.*
- H. **Repetition** is a device in which words, sounds, and ideas are used more than once for the purpose of enhancing rhythm and creating emphasis, e.g., “... government of the people, shall not perish from the earth.”
- I. A **rhetorical question** is a question which expects no answer. It is used to draw attention to a point and is generally stronger than a direct statement, e.g., *If Mr. Ferchoff is always fair, as you have said, why did he refuse to listen to Mrs. Baldwin's arguments?*

3. Examine **sentence beginning**. Is there a good variety, or does a pattern emerge?
4. Examine the **arrangement** of ideas in a **sentence**. Are they set out in a special way for a purpose?
5. Examine the **arrangement** of ideas in a **paragraph** to see if there is evidence of any pattern or structure.
6. Words that **describe syntax** are as follows:

Abrupt	Disorganized	Esoteric	Jumbled	Musical	Spare	Unadorned
Austere	Dry	Flowery	Laconic	Obfuscating	Sprawling	Whimsical
Chaotic	Elaborate	Grating	Lilting	Ornate	Staccato	
Deceptively	Elegant	Harsh	Lyrical	Plain	Terse	
Simple	Erudite	Journalistic	Mellifluous	Solid	Thudding	

VOICE- Some words that describe the reader's perception of the speaker's personality

Here are some words that describe the speaker's overall voice and/ or writer's style:

- Abstruse:** hard to understand; recondite; esoteric
- Articulate:** thoughts, arguments, and ideas are clear and effective; easy to understand
- Artificial:** lacking naturalness or spontaneity; forced; contrived; feigned
- Bombastic:** high-sounding; high-flown; inflated; pretentious
- Chatty:** friendly and informal
- Circuitous:** taking a long time to say what you really mean when you are talking or writing
- Clean:** language or humor that does not offend people, especially because it does not involve sex
- Colloquial:** characteristic of or appropriate to ordinary or familiar conversation rather than formal speech or writing; informal
- Conversational:** informal, like a private conversation
- Crisp:** clear and effective, conservative and efficient with word use
- Cultured:** writing that demonstrates the speaker's development or improvement of the mind by education or training with attention to excellent in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits,
- Declamatory:** formal expressing feelings or opinions with great force
- Detached:** aloof and objective; dispassionate, disinterested, objective, uninvolved, outside, neutral,
- Diffuse:** formal using too many words and not easy to understand
- Discursive:** including information that is not relevant to the main subject
- Economical:** does not use more words than are necessary
- Elliptical:** suggesting what you mean rather than saying or writing it clearly
- Eloquent:** expressing what you mean using clear and effective language
- Emotional:** characterized by intense feeling that is easily excited and openly displayed
- Emphatic:** making your meaning very clear because you have very strong feelings about a situation or subject
- Epigrammatic:** expressing something such as a feeling or idea in a short and clever or funny way
- Esoteric:** intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest

Euphemistic: talking about unpleasant or embarrassing subjects without mentioning the things themselves

Exact: not approximated in any way; precise

Flowery: uses many complicated words that are intended to make it more attractive

Fluent: clear and confident, without seeming to make an effort

Formal: correct or conservative in style, and appropriate for official or serious situations or occasions

Gossipy: lively and full of news about the writer of the letter and about other people

Grandiloquent: expressed in extremely formal language in order to impress people, and often sounding silly because of this

Homespun: plain, unpolished, unsophisticated, simple, rustic

Idiomatic: expressing things in a way that sounds natural in certain regions or among certain groups of people

Inarticulate: not able to express clearly what you want to say

Incoherent: unable to express yourself clearly

Informal: language that is appropriate for using with friends but not in formal situations

Insipid: without distinctive, interesting, or stimulating qualities; vapid

Journalistic: similar in style to journalism

Learned: shows great knowledge about a subject, especially an academic subject

Libelous: contains things about someone that are not true

Literary: deliberate social commentary, political criticism, or focus on the individual to explore some part of the human condition

Lyric: using words to express feelings in the way that a song would; having the qualities of music

Moralistic: concerned with regulating the morals of others, as by imposing censorship

Obscure: not clear or plain; ambiguous, vague, or uncertain; hard to perceive

Ornate: using unusual words and complicated sentences

Orotund: very formal containing extremely formal and complicated language intended to impress people

Pedantic: ostentatious in one's learning; overly concerned with minute details or formalisms

Pejorative: expresses criticism or a bad opinion of someone or something

Picturesque: unusual, vivid, and interesting; attractive, especially in a quaint or pretty style

Pithy: short and very effective; brief, forceful, and meaningful in expression; full of vigor, or substance; terse; forcible

Poetic: expressing ideas in a very sensitive way and with great beauty or imagination

Polemical: formal using or supported by strong arguments

Ponderous: serious and boring

Portentous: trying to seem very serious and important, in order to impress people

Precise: definite or exact in statement; exact in measuring, recording

Pretentious: characterized by assumption of dignity or importance, especially when exaggerated or undeserved; making an exaggerated outward show; ostentatious

Prolix: very formal using too many words and therefore boring

Provincial: having or showing the manners, viewpoints, etc., considered characteristic of unsophisticated inhabitants of a province; rustic; narrow or illiberal

Punchy: has a strong effect because it uses clear simple language and not many words

Rambling: long and confusing; lacking a coherent plan; diffuse and disconnected

Rhetorical: using devices intended to influence people; impressive but is not necessarily honest

Rough: not completely finished

Scholarly: having the qualities of a scholar; concerned with academic learning and research

Sententious: expressing opinions about right and wrong behavior in a way that is intended to impress people

Sesquipedalian: very formal using a lot of long words that most people do not understand

Slangy: informal containing or using a lot of slang

Succinct: expressed in a very short but clear way

Tongue in cheek: intended to be humorous and not meant seriously

Trite: lacking in freshness or effectiveness because of constant use or excessive repetition;
hackneyed; stale

Turgid: using language in a way that is complicated and difficult to understand; tediously pompous or bombastic

Vague: does not clearly or fully explain something; not clear

Verbose: using more words than necessary, and therefore long and boring

Wordy: using more words than are necessary, especially long or formal words

And here are some more:

Able	Compassionate	Excited	Honest	Lively	Plain	Sad	Thrilling
Accepting	Complex	Expert	Hopeful	Lovable	Pleasant	Sarcastic	Timid
Adventurous	Conceited	Fair	Humble	Loving	Pleasing	Self-Confident	Tireless
Aggressive	Confident	Faithful	Humorous	Loyal	Poor	Self-Conscious	Tolerant
Ambitious	Considerate	Fancy	Imaginative	Manipulative	Popular	Selfish	Tough
Annoying	Contemplative	Fatuous	Imperious	Materialistic	Pretty	Sensible	Tricky
Arrogant	Cooperative	Fighter	Impulsive	Mature	Prim	Sensitive	Triumphant
Articulate	Courageous	Forgiving	Inane	Melancholy	Proper	Serious	Trusting
Athletic	Creative	Free	Independent	Merry	Proud	Shallow	Ugly
Awkward	Credulous	Friendly	Innocent	Messy	Questioning	Short	Understanding
Boastful	Curious	Frustrated	Insecure	Mischievous	Quiet	Shy	Unhappy
Bold	Dainty	Fun-Loving	Inspid	Naïve	Radical	Silly	Unique
Bossy	Daring	Funny	Insolent	Neat	Realistic	Simple	Unlucky
Brave	Dark	Generous	Intelligent	Nervous	Rebellious	Sincere	Unselfish
Bright	Defiant	Gentle	Inventive	Noisy	Reflective	Smart	Vain
Busy	Demanding	Giving	Jealous	Obnoxious	Relaxed	Stable	Vain
Calm	Determined	Gorgeous	Joyful	Opinionated	Reliable	Strong	Vivacious
Careful	Devout	Gracious	Judgmental	Organized	Religious	Stubborn	Warm
Careless	Disagreeable	Grouchy	Keen	Outgoing	Reserved	Studious	Wild
Caring	Disgruntled	Gullible	Kind	Passive	Respectful	Successful	Willing
Cautious	Dreamer	Handsome	Knowledgeable	Patient	Responsible	Tall	Wise
Cheerful	Eager	Happy	Lazy	Patriotic	Reverent	Tantalizing	Witty
Clever	Efficient	Hard-Working	Leader	Perfectionist	Rich	Tender	
Clumsy	Embarrassed	Haughty	Light-Hearted	Personable	Rigid	Tense	
Cold	Energetic	Helpful	Likeable	Pitiful	Rude	Thoughtful	



W₄ O₁ R₄ D₄ S₄

H₄ A₁ V₄ E₁

P₃ O₁ W₄ E₁ R₁