

Developing Your Academic Voice

What is academic voice?

Words to Acquire:

Poignant	Provocative
Insightful	Discourse
Compelling	Striking
Excellent	Powerful
Significant	*Agency*

Words to Avoid:

Very	Good
Like	Just
Truly	Nice
Interesting	Such
Seems	Sweet

*****Agency: A character's ability to act of their own volition with direction, cause, motivation, and desire. *****

Jane Eyre develops her own agency throughout the course of the novel allowing her to reject St. John's offer and follow her heart.

[or]

Jo, the street-sweeper in *Bleak House*, possesses little agency as he remains the helpless victim of the cruel environment of industrial London.

How can these sentences be altered?

- A. Elizabeth demonstrates her very interesting views on courtship and its place in English society in her discussions throughout the novel.
- B. Faulkner truly understands his characters and does such a good job describing people just as they are.

C. The scenery in Hardy's novel seemed nice and it was like the characters were walking in Eden.

Beware of Using "This":

Catherine's life becomes bleak after choosing to forsake Heathcliff in favor of Edgar. Although she thought it would be possible to love Edgar eventually, she becomes more indifferent to him as their marriage continues. **This** causes her a great deal of pain. Soon after she marries Edgar, Heathcliff runs away. After **this**, Catherine is utterly distraught and stays up waiting for him. The next day her brother comments, "You look as dismal as a drowned whelp-- why are you so damp and pale, child" (Bronte 180). Catherine is colorless without Heathcliff and **this** slowly drains the life out of her. She does not realize her extreme dependence upon him but her pallid outward countenance reveals **this** truth. The bleak existence of her soul becomes progressively worse without Heathcliff. **This** eventually leads to her death.

A. Which "this" is necessary?

B. How can you replace "this" with the subject/event/action that it is replacing?

Additional Tips:

1. Know when to use I/we/us and when to use one/readers.
2. Use complex sentences. Do not be afraid of semi-colons!
3. Do not use contractions (don't, can't, isn't, aren't, doesn't).
4. Know your diction! Be careful about using the thesaurus on your computer. Do not use a word unless you know what it means. It is a great tool when used well.
5. Wikipedia is not a scholarly source.
6. When using critical sources, evaluate the critic and the article. Resist using the shortest article.
7. Do not end a sentence with a preposition; often you can simply rework the word order.