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Quick Study ACADEMIC **English Fundamentals 3** **SENTENCE Structure & Style**

Boost confidence & test scores!

What is Style? The word *style* comes from the Latin word *stylus*, a pointed instrument used for writing on wax tablets during ancient times. Today, style is the general term for the distinctive characteristics of a person's written expression, including elements such as diction, tone, imagery, point of view, syntax, rhythm, sentence structure, and punctuation.

Elements & Principles of Good Writing

Good writers develop a style that is based on the ideas they want to present, their purpose for writing, and their intended audience. Each writer's style is unique, and individual writers might use different styles for different types of writing. However, all good writers share a common purpose—to make their writing as clear, interesting, and effective as possible. Whether writing an expository text, an informational article, a persuasive essay, or a narrative story, an understanding of key elements of style will help you achieve this purpose.

[NOTE: For more on writing, see QuickStudy® English Fundamentals 4.]

DICTION & TONE
Diction is your choice of words—what you say. **Tone** is your attitude toward your subject matter—how you say it. Just as you speak in a certain tone of voice, your writing also expresses a tone. This may be humorous or serious, formal or informal, positive or negative. Asking yourself two key questions will help you establish your tone: Why am I writing? (purpose) and Who will read my text? (audience). Although your tone may shift or change throughout your writing, keeping your general tone in mind will help you stay focused on your ideas.

WORD CHOICE
Word choice, or diction, is an important component of style, affecting your tone and your readers' reaction to your message. Word choice is an individual decision. What works for one writer may not work for another. Think about what works best for your audience and the message you are trying to convey.

Consider the following when choosing your words:

- Limit your use of general, abstract terms. Instead, use **specific, concrete** language to make your writing clearer, more interesting, and more vivid.

Aspects of Word Meanings	
GENERAL: The weather has been extreme on the East Coast.	Connotation: dictionary definition or literal (neutral) meaning of a word
SPECIFIC: New York had snow and ice last week.	Denotation: emotional implications (positive or negative) associated with a word

- Use the **precise** word to express exactly what you mean. Many words considered as synonyms have different shades of meaning, or different **connotations**. Choose words carefully because two words can have similar meanings but different tones, as illustrated in the following example:

NEUTRAL: Mr. Waverly is a *known* scientist.
POSITIVE: Mr. Waverly is a *famous* scientist.
NEGATIVE: Mr. Waverly is an *infamous* scientist.

- Use **sensory language** to make your message more vivid and help your readers see, hear, feel, taste, and smell the objects and events being described.

NEUTRAL: As I walked into the kitchen, I felt heat from the oven and smelled the apple pies.
VIVID: As I darted into the bright kitchen, I was suddenly surrounded by enveloping warmth and the mouth-wateringly sweet smell of freshly baked apple pies.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE
Figurative language is what adds color and imagination to your writing and helps readers visualize, or create mental pictures of what they are reading. Figurative language is the opposite of literal language and includes all figures of speech. The most common are:

- Similes:** A simile compares two unlike concepts and uses the words *like* or *as*.

EXAMPLE: The loudspeaker roared out like thunder.
 The animal's fur was as soft as silk.

- Metaphors:** A metaphor compares two unrelated concepts by likening the first to something else. Unlike similes, metaphors **DO NOT** use the words *like* and *as*.

EXAMPLE: The storm was a raging wild man.
 Tina is a ray of sunshine in my life.

- Analogies:** An analogy compares two different things and highlights their similarities for the purpose of clarifying a concept.

EXAMPLE: Personal computers are the automobiles of the information age. Both began as status symbols only possessed by the wealthy, but eventually became an essential possession for everyone. Automobiles allowed people to travel wherever they liked. Likewise, personal computers allow people to travel all over the world via the Internet.

- Idioms:** An idiom is a phrase that cannot be understood based on its literal meaning. Idioms refer to a figurative meaning that is known through common use. Idioms vary from culture to culture.

EXAMPLE: John told me there was an elephant outside, but I think he was pulling my leg.
Meaning: John told me there was an elephant outside, but I think he was trying to fool me.

- Irony:** Irony is a figure of speech in which you state the opposite of what you mean. Be careful when using irony as it is effective only if your readers understand that you are using it. Otherwise, they might take your words literally and believe that you mean what you are saying.

EXAMPLE: Scientists say that the growing hole in the ozone layer is allowing more harmful radiation to filter down to us. Well, I propose a simple solution to this problem: fill pollution restrictions. If we allow factories to pump more pollutants into the air, we can build up a healthy layer of greenhouse gases to protect us from this dangerous radiation from space. The best part is, we've already begun working on the solution!

quick tip! Use similes, metaphors, analogies, idioms, and irony to make your writing more vivid and interesting.

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References:

[Basic Mathematics Teacher 39 S Annotated Edition](#)