



Writing with Muscle:

Using Strong Verbs

Weak Verbs (wimpy, wimpy):	Strong Verbs (hefty, hefty):
<p>1. Are verbs of being – they use the “to be” form including: is, was, were, am, are, has been, etc..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: She is cold. • Revised: She shivered from the cold, wet wind. 	<p>1. Create a sense of direct, specific action, and as concrete words, create an image in the reader’s mind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: slump, cackle, shove, roar, jump, smile, swivel, pivot, float
<p>2. May also include vague words such as get, do, make, come, and go</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: The dog comes when called. • Revised: The dog raced when I whistled. • Example: I did the work last night. • Revised: 	<p>2. Focus an idea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: narrate, condemn, recount, skitter, explore, criticize, commend
<p>3. As “to be verbs” offer little variety; in fact, only a dozen of these exist in English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: Biology is interesting to me. • Revised: Biology interests me. • Example: He was in bed for 12 hours. • Revised: Ted slept for 12 hours. 	<p>3. Tighten and strengthen a sentence. <i>(Writers should never use seventeen words when eleven will do.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: It was brought to my attention by Dr. Lewis that I had failed to define my terms. • Revised: Dr. Lewis pointed out that I had failed to define my terms.

List of to be verbs: am, are, is, was, were, be, become, became

Revise by finding the action and rebuilding the sentences around this action.

Poor: His work shirt had dark rings where it had been stained with sweat.

Better:

Revise by replacing the “to be” or wimpy verb with a muscular verb.

Poor: A snake is under the porch.

Better:

Poor: I got in late last night.

Better:

Directions: Make the following sentences stronger.

1. Tamara is a good shooter.
2. The movie was boring to me.
3. There is a job that interests me a great deal.
4. The Packers loss to the Bears got me sick.
5. Her report makes a recommendation that we do a study of the problem.
6. The committee has made the following series of recommendations
7. The term "domain expertise" is used to describe some of the responses we can make.
8. Laura is a photograph for the local newspaper.
9. That scandal is interesting to a lot of people.
10. How can we get out of here gracefully?
11. I've got a brand new car which is a 2003 Ford Mustang convertible.