

HELPING STUDENTS TO IMPROVE THEIR WRITING

OVERUSED AND SLANG WORDS

Students often use the same words over and over in their writing. Often alternative words or phrases would more appropriately convey the idea(s) the writer is trying to say. Parents and teachers need to encourage an expanded vocabulary.

The following words are often overused in children's writing. Parents can work with their children to find different ways of expressing these ideas. Resources to use might include a thesaurus, a dictionary, or the Internet. What overused words could be added to the following list?

- | | | |
|--------|-------------|--------|
| ▶ Good | ▶ Pretty | ▶ New |
| ▶ Bad | ▶ Beautiful | ▶ Walk |
| ▶ Went | ▶ Very | ▶ Then |
| ▶ Said | ▶ Old | |
| ▶ Nice | ▶ Give | |

HOW DO YOU GET FROM HERE TO THERE?

The word GO is one of the most overused words in the English language. It is most often used to mean how a person or object moved from one place to another. The following is a partial list of words that could be used instead of GO.

amble	march	run	toddle
ambulate	meander	sally	track
bustle	migrate	saunter	traipse
canter	pace	scatter	tramp
charge	parade	shimmy	traverse
crawl	patrol	slog	troop
gallivant	perambulate	snake	trudge
gallop	plod	split	wander
hike	prance	stalk	waddle
hobble	promenade	step	weave
hop	prowl	stomp	
jog	race	stride	
locomote	ramble	stroll	
lumber	roam	strut	
lurch	rove	stumble	

Slang words are another problem in formal writing. Slang is a form of language that is most often used in spoken rather than written language and is usually identified with a particular region or group of people. Many slang words are negative. If a slang word is used often enough, it may become part of our formal written language.

If there are slang words in children's writing, parents can ask their children to think of other words or phrases that he/she could use.

PROOFREADING 101

Proofreading one's own work is very difficult for children and adults. The following is a list of the most common errors that people make in their written work. Using these tips, parents can help children proofread their work:

1. Subject verb agreement: Did you make certain that singular subjects use singular verbs and that plural verbs use plural verbs?
2. Tense – Are all the verbs in a paragraph in the same tense? Did you use the tense that makes sense in the sentence?
3. Spelling – Have you checked for the correct spelling of all words?
4. Capital Letters – Did you capitalize all the words that need capital letters? (cities, titles, names, etc.)
5. Sentences – Are any of your sentences run-on or just a fragment?
6. Punctuation – Did you use commas, periods, question marks, quotation marks, etc. correctly?
7. Sentences – Does each sentence have a subject and verb? Are your sentences too long or too short? Did you vary the length of your sentences?
8. Missing words or incorrect words– Did you leave anything out that you thought you included? Did you use a word incorrectly?