

USING SPECIFIC DICTION

Diction usually refers to the type of word choice provided to an audience.

When writing for a college course, the instructor will often ask for “definite and concrete” language. Therefore, you should consider a few things: What words do I need in order to help my audience understand me? And, how specific should I be?

Oftentimes, you should ask yourself what is appropriate for the audience:

Shrubs -> Very General

Tree -> General

Oak Tree -> Specific

Quercus Rober -> Very Specific

The difference between these terms is specificity. Since the goal of most writing is to be understood and to be clear, then you should really consider which level of specificity is needed.

EXERCISE

Read the group of words, and identify the level of specificity (indicate: Very General, General, Specific, or Very Specific).

1. Car, Beater, Honda Accord, Black Honda Accord V6 2.0L
2. Wormwood, Plant, Herbs, *Artemisia Absinthium*
3. Virus, Illness, Retrovirus, Alpharetrovirus
4. Explosive, Nitroglycerin-Based Explosive, Dynamite, High Explosive
5. Discipline, Applied Mathematics, Mathematics, Probability Theory