

**Energize Your Writing with Strong Verbs**

**Step 1: Replace *To Be* Verbs**

It’s virtually impossible to write without using ***to be*** verbs. However, most people overuse these verbs, and the result is lackluster prose. The problem is, ***to be*** verbs just don’t convey the same dynamism as stronger, more exciting verbs. If you want to energize your writing, try these techniques:

1. **Replace the *to be* verb with a more expressive verb:**

🗷 The coach **is** loud during games.

* The coach **shouts** during games.

🗷 The café’s sandwiches **are** excellent.

* The café **serves** excellent sandwiches.

🗷 The student **is** afraid of failing the test.

* The student **fears** failing the test.

1. **Change a noun into a verb:**

🗷 Our uncle **is** the **driver** of the bus.

* Our uncle **drives** the bus.

1. **Combine short, choppy sentences:**

**🗷** The band’s music **is** excellent. The lyrics **are** meaningful. The melodies **are** catchy. The percussion **is** energetic.

* The band **plays** excellent music, with meaningful lyrics, catchy melodies, and energetic percussion.

1. **Don’t overuse *there is, there are, there were, this is,* *that are,* etc.:**

**🗷 There are** many apartments **that** **are** empty and need new tenants.

* Many empty apartments **need** new tenants.

1. **Replace a to be verb + a prepositional phrase with a strong verb:**

**🗷** Social media **is** influential for millennials.

* Social media **influences** millennials.

1. **Replace a *to be* verb + an *–ing* word with a simple verb:**

**🗷** The cat **was scratching** at the back door.

* The cat **scratched** at the back door.

🗷 The dragonfly **was hovering** over the pond.

* The dragonfly **hovered** over the pond.

**Step 2: Avoid Adverbs**

In his book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, Stephen King exclaims, “I believe the road to hell is paved with adverbs, and I will shout it from the rooftops.” He makes an excellent point. Rather than using a **verb + adverb combination**, it’s better to use a verb that is strong enough to stand on its own.

**🗷** He **went quickly** to the store.

* He **hurried** to the store.

**🗷** She **looked angrily** at her friend.

* She **glared** at her friend.

**🗷** He **messily wrote** his name at the bottom of the contract.

* He **scrawled** his name at the bottom of the contract.

**Step 3: Get Creative with Verbs**

Still trying to think of better verbs? Here are some common verbs with stronger alternatives:

**Said:** announced, uttered, suggested, stuttered, argued, bellowed, whispered

**Looked:** surveyed, gazed, stared, glanced, squinted, leered

**Walked:** sauntered, strolled, traipsed, tramped, marched, hiked, ambled, plodded

**Went:** fled, passed, moseyed, left, set off, withdrew, took flight, set off



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