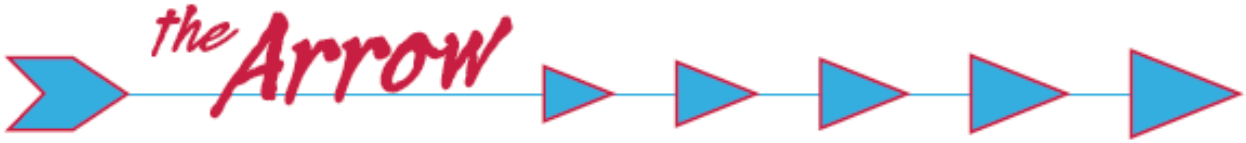
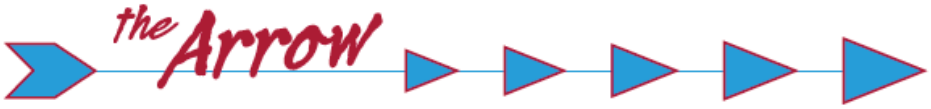


James and the Giant Peach

By Roald Dahl

Dictation passages



Week One

Then, one day, James's mother and father went to London to do some shopping, and there a terrible thing happened. Both of them suddenly got eaten up (in full daylight, mind you, and on a crowded street) by an enormous angry rhinoceros which had escaped from the London Zoo.

(Chapter 1)

Week One:

Suspense:

> Then, one day, James's mother and father went to London to do some shopping, and there a terrible thing happened. Both of them suddenly got eaten up (in full daylight, mind you, and on a crowded street) by an enormous angry rhinoceros which had escaped from the London Zoo.
>
> *(Chapter 1)*

Why this passage:

This paragraph is the surprise twist following the first paragraph.

What to note:

"James" is a proper noun so it is capitalized in the middle of the sentence. Because it is "possessive" (meaning that James "has" something), an apostrophe 's' ('s) is added to the end of the name, even though there is an 's' already there. In this sentence, James *possesses* his parents.

There are two more proper nouns in this passage. See if your kids can find them and explain why they are "proper nouns." (Answer: London, London Zoo—the first a name of a city, which is always capitalized; the second, the name of an institution, both of the terms capitalized.) "Zoo" (usually a common noun) is not capitalized unless we are talking about the name of a zoo, as is the case in this passage.

There is a nice use of parentheses in this passage. More on that in the grammar section.

The noun, *rhinoceros*, is tricky to spell. The silent 'h' paired with the 'r' is one of those hard-to-remember digraphs (two or three consonants that represent a single sound). A few other "rh" words are:

- rhyme
- rhombus

- rhythm
- rhetoric
- rhapsody

Keep these in mind when playing Scrabble!

How to teach the passage:

Read the passage together with your child. Run your finger under the words as you read it aloud. On the second pass, pause when you get to a punctuation mark. Then note the following comments about those punctuation marks.

Commas: In the very first sentence, there are two uses of commas. These bracket the words "one day." If the phrase and commas are taken out of the sentence, the remaining words in the sentence make sense all by themselves. Read it. See? "One day" merely adds clarification (descriptive detail), which is why this phrase is put between commas. The words "one day" are not essential to the sentence itself.

Initial Capital: The second punctuation mark you come across is the initial capital: "James's." We capitalize anyone's proper name.

Possessive: "James's" also includes the apostrophe 's' ('s) for the possessive. Ask your child: "How do we make the possessive?" Talk about examples using your own names.

For instance, you might say to your son Joseph:

Let's make a possessive using your name. How would I let someone know that this sandwich belongs to you?

Let Joseph answer. He should say, *Joseph's sandwich*.

If he does not, you will guide him to imitate what you read in the passage. Use your own name as an example, first: *Julie's laptop*. Find many items in the house to "possess."

- Dad's afghan
- Mom's headset
- Carol's video game
- Paul's paints
- Buddy's chew toy

Not all possessions are concrete objects, however. Talk about what else can be possessed that isn't an "item."

- Erica's courage
- Grandpa's generosity

- Trixie's friendliness
- Aunt Susan's sense of humor
- Uncle Joe's carpentry skill

Possessive, when attached to people, relates to any item or quality that someone "has."

Two such characters in the story are Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker. They are purported to have been cruel women. We might say:

- Aunt Sponge's laziness
- Aunt Spiker's selfishness

Create some more! Be silly, if you like. Or select characters from films you know well.

- Cruella de Ville's fur coat
- Robin Hood's bow and arrows
- Aladdin's magic lamp
- The Beast's nasty temper
- Rapunzel's long yellow hair
- Merida's bravery

Comma: The next punctuation mark is a comma. It separates two *independent clauses* (fancy speak for what could be two separate sentences, if the writer wanted to take the word "and" out of the middle). Any time the word "and" signals what would be another complete sentence, a comma precedes it. However, if the word "and" joins two nouns or merely adds a prepositional phrase, then there is no need for a comma.

Examples:

- I'll have a pear and an apple.
- I'll have the pear, and my sister will eat the apple.

The next punctuation mark gets its own section! Read on.

Grammar Notes: Psst! I have a secret to share! (Parenthetical remarks)

The following discussion can be read to your child directly:

The parenthetical statement is the next big punctuation mark in the passage and is this week's focus for your grammar lesson. Read the passage and notice the way you want to lean over and whisper the contents between the parentheses into someone's ear.

Have you ever heard of an "aside" in theater? An *aside* is a term used to indicate when the actor on stage, while in character, steps out of the storyline a moment to talk directly to the audience. Important details not clear from the action are shared with the audience by the character. Often this is when the character "thinks out loud" so that the audience is privy to the reasoning behind a coming-action.

Sometimes actors will even *lean toward* the audience, *away* from the action on stage, to make it clear that they are now directing their comments to the audience, and away from the other characters.

In this novel, Dahl does a version of the "aside" in his writing. He directs his personal thoughts to the reader inside parentheses, adding details to the story that would be of special interest to the reader but that don't particularly advance the plot in the moment.

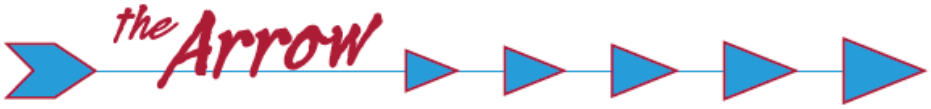
In fact, the details between the parentheses in this passage are what convey the main elements of surprise. It's shocking enough that James's parents are "suddenly eaten up" (first shock!), but then to find out that they were eaten in *broad daylight* on a *very busy street* defies logic! That's Dahl's aim. He wants to heighten the reader's sense of outrage and shock.

It's as though the author just said, "*Psst. I have a little inside information to share with you that* ***you will not believe*** *before we go on with the story.*"

Practice an aside now. Talk to your parent or a sibling about something that happened to you today. Now, add a little extra remark and when you do, lean sideways and put your hand over your mouth like this:

The parenthetical remark is like whispering a secret to your best friend—only the best friend is the reader, and the author is the one whispering the secret—those additional details that help the reader understand the story better. Think of the two marks ( ) as cupped hands telling the reader what else he or she needs to know!

Try using parentheses in your freewrite this week—you can add them after you finish the initial draft, or you can try to include them as you go! Whatever you do, play with parentheses and see how they feel in your hands.



Week Two

"*There* he goes again!" the Earthworm cried, speaking for the first time. "He simply cannot stop telling lies about his legs! He doesn't have anything *like* a hundred of them! He's only got forty-two! They just take his word. And anyway, there is nothing *marvelous*, you know, Centipede, about having a lot of legs."

(Chapter 12)

Week Two:

The devil is in the details:

> "*There* he goes again!" the Earthworm cried, speaking for the first time. "He simply cannot stop telling lies about his legs! He doesn't have anything *like* a hundred of them! He's only got forty-two! They just take his word. And anyway, there is nothing *marvelous*, you know, Centipede, about having a lot of legs."
>
> *(Chapter 12)*

Why this passage:

Roald Dahl takes such delight in busting the myth of the hundred-legged bug called the *centipede* (meaning: *centi* 100 + *pede* feet in Latin).

What to note:

This passage is loaded with punctuation that impacts meaning. The most important objective when teaching punctuation is to get your kids to experience the coupling of "mark on the page" with "meaning in the sentence." We can only do that if we look at punctuation marks as "traffic cops." They direct us through the maze of words to where the author wants those words to take us.

For instance, Dahl cleverly conveys *intonation* (how the Earthworm *says* his words) by using "italics." Each time a word is italicized, the reader knows to draw out the word, to slow down and "hit it" hard so that it stands out from the rest of the sentence. Try it. See how it feels to drag out the word when you come to it in italics. Each time a word is italicized, it gets special emphasis. In this passage, the italics create the experience of exasperation on the part of the Earthworm.

The exclamation points give an additional oomph to the sentences. The exclamation point indicates "exclaiming" – to declare urgently, without regard for propriety (being polite).

Whereas "proclamation" indicates prepared remarks, "exclamation" indicates extemporaneous (spontaneous) interjections—unforced, automatic, shouts; sometimes accompanied by exasperation, as in this case.

The exclamation point, then, serves to give the reader insight into the emotional outburst of the Earthworm.

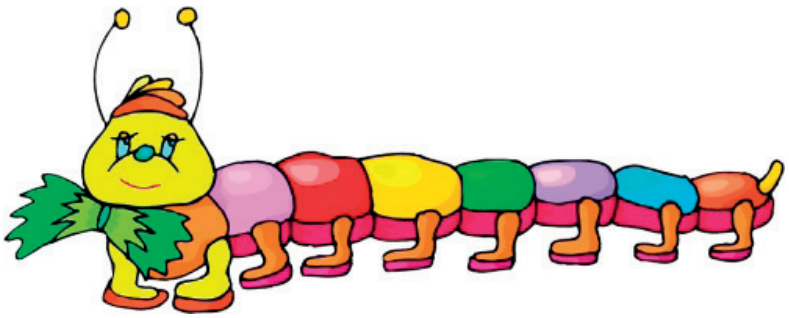
Notice that the words *Earthworm* and *Centipede* are both capitalized since these are their names.

How to teach the passage:

Let's talk bugs.

The giant peach is full of them! The passage for Week Two features a fit of jealousy from the Earthworm, directed toward his comrade-with-abundant feet, the Centipede. What have we learned about the Earthworm? Not only does he lack appendages, but he's also blind! The poor worm slithers his way through life, unremarkable and unable to see (though apparently earthworms do sense light and heat). Is it any wonder that when confronted with the demanding, proud Centipede, the Earthworm blows off steam by challenging the Centipede's primary source of pride: his feet?

Most children are familiar with the bug called the "centipede." Books like *Centipede's 100 Shoes* (by Tony Ross) perpetuate the notion that centipedes have 100 feet (50 right and 50 left). Roald Dahl exposes the myth in this short diatribe by the Earthworm, revealing to the surprise of the reader that, in fact, centipedes do not necessarily have 100 feet. In fact, a little research indicates that they may have anywhere from 20 to 300 feet depending on how many body segments they possess. In this story, Earthworm expresses jealousy at the attention the Centipede gets for his 42 feet. After all, the Centipede repeatedly asks for help putting on his shoes and taking them off again.



The Earthworm ends his rant by denigrating legs all together. Ask your child why he might do this? Since the Earthworm lacks feet and legs himself, he feels he must "put down" the Centipede as a way to bolster himself. Ask your kids if they've ever done that or if they can think of another time a person or character in a book deliberately belittles someone else because of a personal deficiency.

Dahl does a great job of teaching the reader a little bit about bugs through this discussion which creates two impacts. First, Dahl corrects the mistaken assumption that all centipedes have 100 feet/legs. Second, he advances the story's character development by showing the reader the rivalry between the Earthworm and the Centipede.

Go over dialog punctuation. Remind your kids that the punctuation marks go inside the quotation marks. To create the feeling of italics in handwriting, use a simple underline under the word.

Grammar notes: Countables

Numbers present a challenge in writing. Do you write them out as words, or do you use the digits from a math problem? Is there a rule to follow? Does it have exceptions?

On the next page is a table that helps kids to keep track of the punctuation habits associated with numbers. Print it out and mount it on cardstock. Then when your kids edit their own writing, suggest they look at each use of numbers in their writing. They can compare their numbers to the conventions here and make corrections before showing you their drafts.

Brave Writer

NUMBERS
Words or Digits? When and Where in Writing

When writing numbers with fewer than four syllables in the context of a longer paragraph, many writers prefer words:
- twenty-four
- seventy-seven
- twelve
- one hundred

Use words for round numbers that are really big:
- four million
- a hundred billion
- thirteen trillion
- a billion

Use the words when writing numbers one through nine.
When you get to 10, use the digits.

Use numerals when writing the time.
- 3:15 PM
- 7:23 AM

Except for *midnight* and *noon* (not 12:00 AM and 12:00 PM).

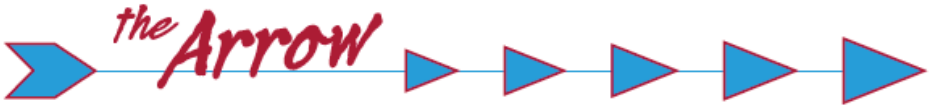
Use digits when writing age:
- Sarah is 16 years old.
- Come to my 100th birthday party.
- He died at age 58.

Recipes, construction measurements, addresses, and phone numbers call for digits, not words.
- Sarah is 16 years old.
- Come to my 100th birthday party.
- He died at age 58.

When writing about decades, there are a few ways to do it:
- The eighties and nineties
- The 80s and 90s
- The 1980's and the 1990's

Use the digits when writing really big, specific numbers like:
- 123,456
- 7,000,452
- 1,094

Be consistent. Regardless of the rule, it is generally expected that within the same sentence, the writer will stick to either words or digits:
- Mary is 6 years old and likes to eat 3 pieces of cake at her party.
- There were twenty students who turned eighteen years old on Saturday.



Week Three

One by one, the travelers came out again onto the top of the peach and gazed carefully around. The moon was still shining as brightly as ever, and there were still plenty of huge shimmering cloud-mountains on all sides. But there were no Cloud-Men in sight now.

(Chapter 28)

Week Three:

Paragraph:

> One by one, the travelers came out again onto the top of the peach and gazed carefully around. The moon was still shining as brightly as ever, and there were still plenty of huge shimmering cloud-mountains on all sides. But there were no Cloud-Men in sight now.
>
> *(Chapter 28)*

Why this passage:

This lovely passage is the calm after the storm of activity in the previous chapter.

What to note:

This paragraph begins the chapter so there is no indentation.

Let's look at the basic structure of this paragraph.

- **First, a good initial sentence *orients* the reader.**

  The opening line of this paragraph establishes who is in the scene and where they are: the "travelers" who are now on top of the peach!

- **Second, the next sentence establishes the setting.**

  We are guided to imagine the time of day (moon = night) and the context (cloud-mountains = sky). The "shining as brightly as ever" remark reassures the reader that all is now well and our band of travelers has survived the recent escapade.

- **Third, the final sentence moves the plot forward.**

  Once the characters are situated, and the reader is reassured, now the reader can be given information that moves the plot forward. In this paragraph, the concluding remark, "But there were no Cloud-Men in sight now," reassures the reader that no more antics will erupt from those mischievous interlopers! The reader is prepared for a new development.

When writing, the reason some sentences are grouped together in paragraph form is that they communicate a unit of information. This paragraph serves as a transition between between chapters. The reader needs a rest, and to be reassured that all is well… for now.

If you read on, you see that the writer pivots fairly quickly to the next plot twist in the very next line!

How to teach the passage:

Take this week to relax. The punctuation is not so complicated, and so this paragraph offers a good opportunity to see how well your kids do punctuating the passage themselves.

First, copy the passage early in the week. Then, it will be the perfect time to introduce Reverse Dictation. We've included a version of it on the next page that you may print and use with your students, if you like. Feel free to create your own, however, that targets specific spelling issues you know your kids have. Check the Boomerang Guidelines for how to create your own reverse dictation practice.

There are 19 errors in this Reverse Dictation Passage (next page). We've included corrections in red on the page after. Have your students underline the misspelled words, then rewrite them correctly at the bottom of the page.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Reverse dictation:

one by one the travellers came out againe onto the top of

the peach and gazed carefulley around the moon was still

shinning as britely as ever and there were still plenty of

huge shimering cloud mountains on all sides but there

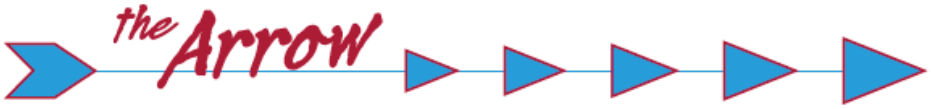
were no cloud men in cite now

Reverse dictation corrections:

One by one, the travelers came out again onto the top of the peach and gazed carefully around. The moon was still shining as brightly as ever, and there were still plenty of huge shimmering cloud-mountains on all sides. But there were no Cloud-Men in sight now.

Grammar notes:

No grammar notes this week.



Week Four

By the time the procession was over, the whole gigantic fruit had been completely eaten up, and only the big brown stone in the middle, licked clean and shiny by ten thousand eager little tongues, was left standing on the truck.

(Chapter 38)

Week Four:

Closing:

> By the time the procession was over, the whole gigantic fruit had been completely eaten up, and only the big brown stone in the middle, licked clean and shiny by ten thousand eager little tongues, was left standing on the truck.
>
> *(Chapter 38)*

Why this passage:

Did you notice what's unusual about this passage? This paragraph is a single sentence! See if your kids can see that without you telling them. Perhaps phrase it like this:

> This week's passage has a unique property. It's a paragraph, but it's an unusual one. Can you guess what's unusual about it?

See what they say. Then discuss. You might even look for other single-sentence paragraphs as you read more books together. The point is this: the four-sentence paragraph format promoted by many writing instruction manuals is a myth. Not all paragraphs conform to that structure. There are myriad reasons for "carriage return, indent." Sometimes the reader needs the visual relief of a new paragraph. Sometimes there isn't more to say! The point is: paragraphing often has to do with the *feel* of the writing. Did all that needs to be said on that point get said? If so, *carriage return, indent*.

What to note:

There are lots of quality vocabulary and spelling words in this passage:

- procession
- whole
- gigantic
- fruit

- completely
- thousand
- eager
- tongues

Put them on a notecard for reference during dictation so that your kids spell them right, if they need to remind themselves of the spellings. This is not cheating! It's ensuring a solid finished product and helps your kids to encode the proper spelling through handwriting practice.

Commas: This passage works as a long sentence because of the well-placed commas in it. The commas frame " dependent clauses" and separate two "independent clauses." My word, what on earth? How do you teach a 3rd grader the difference between dependent and independent clauses? Read this week's grammar lesson to help you. For now, note that the commas create pauses in the right places so that the sentence makes sense. Try ignoring the commas and reading right through. You want to pause, don't you? Commas help to group thoughts together in little bunches to make it easier to grasp their meaning.

Did you notice the big number written in words? "Ten-thousand" is three syllables, and it's a round number. Which of the conventions did he follow? Check your editing tool from Week Two to figure it out.

How to teach this passage:

This paragraph is quite a vivid image—children (ten-thousand of them!) all eat the peach fruit and lick the pit (stone) clean. Dahl never uses the word "children," but implies it instead. How does he do that? He describes "ten thousand eager little tongues!" The use of the word pair "eager little" conveys youthfulness. By identifying the "tongues" as the chief feature of the children, he implies "children" by naming their tongues instead (since it is the tongue that does the licking). One way to create variety in writing is to avoid predictable language. Substituting "tongues" for "children" achieves that effect here. When your kids write, suggest to them that they find ways to convey predictable information using alternative terms.

For instance, if writing about soccer players, perhaps a child might write about all the "kickers." Or perhaps she might highlight that a "head bumped the ball back into play." Variety is critical to good writing, and finding alternate terms for expected nouns is a great way to create it!

(More on this topic in the Literary Element of this Month: Stylish Synonyms).

Grammar Notes: The Other Clauses (Not Santa and the Mrs.)

Fluency in any language is the ability to string together words and phrases so that they maximize communication—they make the intention of the speaker or writer clear. When we talk, sometimes we back track to give a bit more information if we omit it as we go. Or, we may pause, and take off on a little clarifying tangent before returning to the main topic.

In writing, the author has less flexibility to correct, redirect, add, or clarify in a moment. The author has to intentionally annex information to the structure of the main thought without confusing the reader. This probably seems obvious, but if you read a first draft of any writing, you will quickly see that many of our thoughts come out in a jumble—related ideas all tacked together, but not necessarily grouped in the most efficient way.

One of the punctuation tools we use to organize our tumble of thoughts is the sturdy little comma. The comma lets the reader know that the cluster of words behind it form one thought (one grouping)—a clause! That grouping usually holds a single idea that is related to the primary idea of the sentence. Because it is attached by a comma, it is called a "dependent clause" (meaning it can't stand up for itself—it requires a complete sentence to hold it up—it *depends* on a main idea to support it).

A Word About Sentence Fragments:

The biggest mistake kids make (and don't worry—they all make it for years and years) is that they treat dependent clauses like sentences and unwittingly create fragments.

If you can see a "fragment" in your child's writing, and say to your child: "Looks like you have a dependent clause hanging out by itself here; what independent clause does it go with?" you may have an easier time of revision.

When you label these rogue clauses as "fragments," the usual reply is, "But that was intentional! I wanted to write a fragment." And that conversation never goes anywhere good.

An independent clause, then, is the meat/heart of the sentence. It doesn't need commas—it's the part of the sentence when all the dependent clauses are removed, still stands up by itself, clearly communicating. It has a subject and a verb. It ends with a "clunk"—that is, you are not left holding your breath, your voice turns down at the end (not up, waiting for more). An independent clause gives an air of completeness no matter how long or short.

Most little kids don't need to know these clause terms specifically. Only as your children enter junior high will it be valuable to give the clauses their proper names. However, the grammatical principles behind clauses are important in punctuation.

In looking at the one-sentence paragraph for this week's lesson, notice just how complex this sentence is! It would be easy for a child to write a complex sentence like this as a series of fragments with periods littered throughout in an attempt to create a four-sentence paragraph. Yet that would be the wrong approach.

The dependent clauses add information to the two independent clauses (joined by the word "and"). They should not be alone.

Practice:

To experience clauses in a more direct way, print and then cut up the following clauses into strips:

By the time the procession was over,

---

the whole gigantic fruit had been completely eaten up,

---

and only the big brown stone in the middle,

---

licked clean and shiny by ten thousand eager little tongues,

---

was left standing on the truck.

Mix the strips in your hands, behind your back. Put them face down on the table. Draw one. (You will read them one at a time).

Ask yourself and your children if the clause is "dependent" or "independent" based on how your voice sounds as you finish saying it. Does your voice inflect upwards? Or does it "clunk" at the end, as though you got to the end of the thought?

It's okay if you aren't sure. Put dependent clauses in one pile, independent clauses in another pile, and the ones that you aren't sure about in another.

Then read the following:

The paragraph in Week Four's passage starts with a dependent clause:

By the time the procession was over,

Did you get that one right?

It's a dependent clause because it starts with a preposition (a little word that signals time or location). Many dependent clauses are what are also known as "prepositional phrases." The grammatical terms are interesting, but you don't have to master them right now. Just know that this first clause is dependent because when you say it, you feel like you are waiting for more information to come after it.

Next, there is an independent clause.

Did you find the one clear independent clause in the bunch? I bet you did.

---

the whole gigantic fruit had been completely eaten up

Notice how the above independent clause makes sense all by itself? Feel how it "clunks" at the end when you say it? That's how you know.

However, you are not finished. There's a trick in this paragraph. There are TWO independent clauses, BUT the second one has a dependent clause stuck right in the middle of it! So now that you have removed the opening dependent clause and the first independent clause from the batch, take the remaining four strips and see if you can find the two strips that together, create a complete sentence (in other words, an "independent clause"). You'll need to identify the dependent clause that breaks them up first.

Did you find the interloping dependent clause?

---

licked clean and shiny by ten thousand eager little tongues,

That's right! So what do you have left now? Two strips that can be laid together to create a single sentence.

And only the big brown stone in the middle was left standing on the truck.

See how you can find the mystery independent clause by getting rid of the dependent one that covered it up and simply pasting the two phrases together into one, meaningful, voice-drops-down-at-the-end sentence? Well done!

Don't worry too much about figuring out clauses correctly every time. For now, pay attention to the writing you read and think about why commas are where they are, and what happens when you remove bits of information. Do you find a hidden complete sentence, independent clause? Or are you left with fragments of thought (dependent clauses) in search of a sturdy sentence against which they can lean?

The point of this work is to begin to understand the *structure* of grammar in a sentence.

Now, go eat a brownie! That was a lot of head-scratching work!

Literary Element

Stylish Synonyms:

This month's literary element is a sure-fire way to create powerful, eye-popping prose. Let's get past the old "check the thesaurus Johnny" habit of upgrading a term from plain-Jane, to a slightly less comfortable version of the same idea. It's time to really grapple with what it means to find the *right* term, the right idea or image to substitute for the recurring idea, person, or thing.

A synonym is a word that approximates the meaning of the original word. Taken one step further—a synonym is more than just a substitute-teacher, popping in to serve duty because the other one got tired and needed a day off. Rather, a stylish synonym is more like a specialty instructor—offering more definition and performing a few tricks to serve up a satisfying image or experience for the reader.

In Week Four, for instance, we looked at the use of the noun "tongues" to stand in for the word "children." While "tongues" is not directly a synonym for "children," it functions as one in its context and offers a direct experience of what really took place—children's tongues licked the stone.

If you write about the "moon" and call it a "glowing orb" or a "ball of cheese" when it is full, or the "curve of a thumbnail" when it is waning, you are creating metaphors that function as synonyms—you are replacing the ordinary word with facsimiles (—words that stand in for the original term which add a layer of meaning).

Sometimes we do find direct synonyms:

Big:

- large
- huge
- massive
- sizeable
- gigantic
- vast

Each of these choices expresses a nuance—an idea of bigness—and we get to choose which we would like to emphasize. That's the fun of finding a synonym to suit!

But we might also express "big-ness" by creating our own self-styled synonym:

Stylish Big:

- super-sized
- tidal-wave
- weighty
- sky-scraping
- bull-dozing
- monstrous

Each of these choices can imply "bigness" if they are in the right context. They are more vivid to the reader than the commonly used term: "big." They offer the reader visual hooks to stimulate the imagination in writing.

Let's look at a noun:

DOG

Your average dog might be described in any of the following ways.

Dog:

- Mutt
- Schnauzer (or any breed name—Dalmatian, Terrier, Shepherd)
- Puppy
- Butt-sniffer (a little crass, but what kid doesn't think about dogs that way from time to time?)
- Barker
- Best friend
- Tag-a-long
- Fur-ball
- Tail-wagger
- Buddy
- Pet

These are all terms that could replace "dog" in a sentence and add detail that gives the reader insight into the particular dog. For instance, if you have a dog that always stands at attention, you might call the dog, "the little lieutenant." If the dog is the kind that sleeps on your bed, you might refer to her as the "cuddle-bug." If you have a drooling, flea-ridden pet, perhaps you call him a "critter," in order to rule out all the affectionate terms one associates with a pet.

But what about this guy?

Stylish Dog:

- Scoundrel
- Junkyard hound
- Teeth-baring dervish
- Dental case

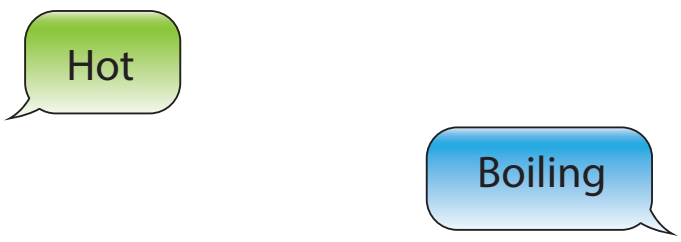
Can you add to this list?

The point is this: When you want to create variety in a piece of writing, consider going beyond the thesaurus in search of direct synonyms, and instead, consider the special terminology that might express something about your particular subject or setting. You get to decide!

As you can see, not every stylish synonym shares the identical meaning with the original word. In fact, that's the point—stylish synonyms should add a particular nuance. There will be a thread of similarity or continuity between the terms which helps the story to cohere (hang together) but there will also be added depth and interest as well. This is the goal of the synonym. You are looking for another way to say the same thing, but you are looking to nuance the idea or to simply use another word that will not be repetitive for the reader.

How often should you go through the work of hunting for synonyms? When writing, a rule of thumb is that you don't want to repeat the same noun in sequential sentences. That means if I say I'm *hot* in the first sentence, I don't want to say it's *hot* outside in the second. I will want to use a synonym to emphasize the heat.

A fun exercise to try with a sibling or parent is to pick a word and then, going back and forth, come up with as many synonyms as you can without duplicating any of them until you run dry. For "hot," you might trade terms like this:



Remember that you can use any meaning of the original term!

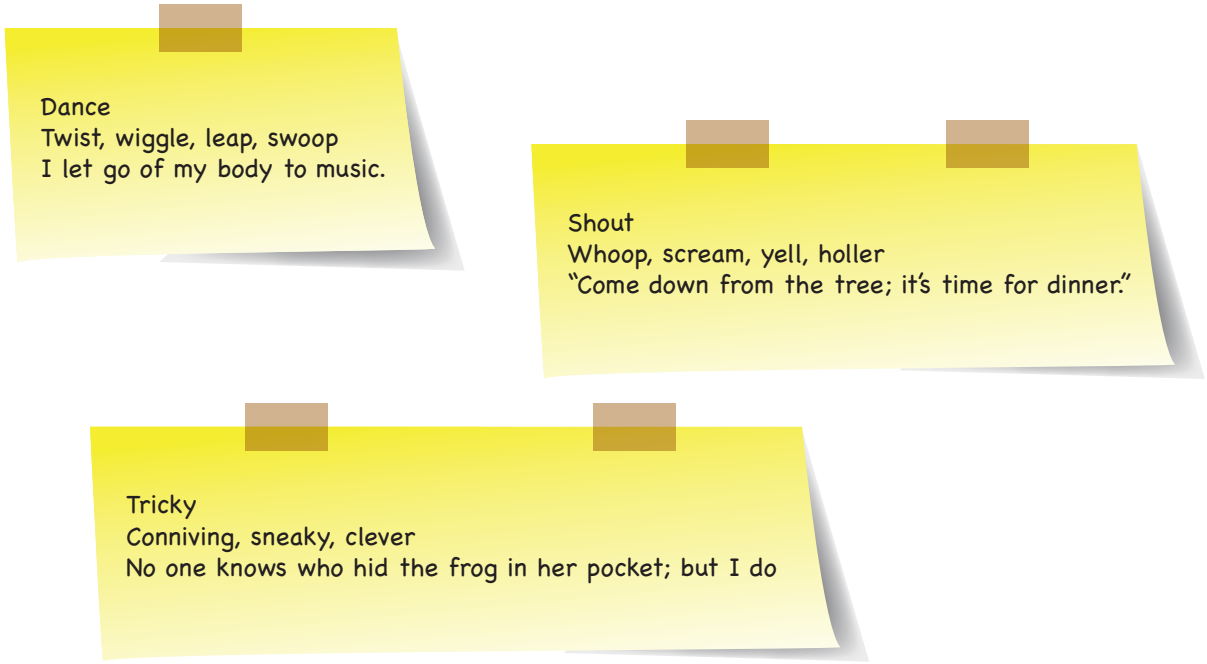
Continue on... until you run out. Then the last one "standing" picks a new word for the game and you start over again.

Writing projects for stylish synonyms:

Synonym Poems

Let's write a synonym poem this month.

1. Start with a word on line one.
2. Write three to four synonyms on the second line.
3. Finish the poem with one line that fits the theme.



Games

To flex those vocabulary muscles, try one or more of the following games. (You may include the use of a thesaurus for some of them, but try not to use it at first just to get the hang of digging deep and pulling up words from your navel).

Synonym Roundabout

Put out four pieces of paper with a single word on the top of each one. You might select words like: beautiful, to jump, funny, food—it's fun to mix it up between adjectives, nouns, and verbs. Then hand each participating person a pencil. Stand up. Set the timer for fifteen seconds. (You can make the time length shorter for competent handwriters, and to make the game more challenging.) During that time, write a synonym under the word at the top. When the bell rings, move to the left and do the same under the word on the next page. You may use as many sheets of paper as you like to start with, but you might like to limit it to the number of participants.

Go for several rounds (maybe three times around each). Then enjoy reading out the variety of words you came up with!

Synonym Word Search

Using graph paper, create a word search. Pick a word such as angry. Then look up synonyms in a thesaurus. Find between five and seven synonyms. Put these in the graph grid both up and down, and side to side. You can even put them so that they overlap or go diagonally. Then fill in around the words with lots of random letters.

When you've finished creating your word search, give it to someone in your family. Tell that person the original word "angry" and then ask her to find whatever number of synonyms you've hidden in the word search. The seeker doesn't even need to know what words to look for. She simply needs to look for synonyms.

You can give a clue if she gets stuck. Be sure you keep a list of the terms in the search so that you remember what they are!

In Writing

Synonym Rewrite

Pick a piece of writing (a story, article, email, advertisement) and rewrite it outrageously using elaborate or silly synonyms. You might enjoy looking through magazines, or in your baby sister's set of board books, or finding a familiar fairy tale online. Keep it short. Overdo it. The goal here is to utterly crush the original writing with over-the-top language for the sheer joy of being ridiculous!

Have fun with synonyms this month!

