

Words can be formal or informal, depending on the writer's audience and purpose. Just as you talk differently to your friends and your teachers, writers choose different words depending on whom they are writing for and why. If you are writing a school paper to convince the principal that your opinion about school uniforms is the correct one, you should use formal, strong, and specific words with clearly understood meanings. If, on the other hand, you are writing a short story to be read by people your own age, you might want to use slang and lots of teen dialect. A writer's words should always suit the audience and purpose of the piece.

Effective diction gives freshness and originality to writing. When you use words in surprising and unusual ways, you have the power to make people think, laugh, or examine new ideas. That's a gift and a responsibility. Learn to experiment and play with words. You need a good vocabulary in order to be a good writer.

*NOTE: Words have been **bolded** for emphasis in this section's passages.*