

Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

The materials labeled Rhetorical Grammar Concepts are for your reference as you do the activities in this unit.

Selecting Active Verbs

Proficient writers often select active verbs that are more precise and interesting, avoiding “to be” and other verbs that don’t communicate much information. A good revision strategy is to look back at your writing and identify verbs like *be*, *have*, *make*, *go*, *do*, *say*, *get*, and *take*. Then see if you can replace them with verbs that provide more information. You can also often rewrite *there is* and *there are* sentences to emphasize an active verb.

Verb: a word used to describe an action, state, or occurrence, and forming the main part of the predicate of a sentence, such as *hear*, *become*, *happen*.

Examples

Weak verb: Politicians and prosecutors say that hard-line stands against juvenile offenders are better.

Stronger verb: Politicians and prosecutors press for hard-line stands against juvenile offenders.

There is/There are: There is research that suggests that adolescents squeezed through the adult system are more likely to come out as violent career criminals.

Stronger verb: Research suggests that adolescents squeezed through the adult system are more likely to come out as violent career criminals.

RGA 2: Selecting Active Verbs

This activity is based on Jennifer Bishop Jenkins, "On Punishment and Teen Killers."

Rewrite the following sentences, replacing a weak verb with a stronger one or eliminating *there is/there are*.

1. A teenager was the killer of my younger sister and her husband in 1990 in suburban Chicago.

*A teenager **murdered** my younger sister and her husband in 1990 in suburban Chicago.*

2. She asked for the life of her unborn child as he shot her.

3. He said to a friend that it was a "thrill kill."

4. There are some advocates who wish to minimize these offenders' culpability.

5. This is a particular problem that Americans have to own, with weapons so easily available.

6. There are teens who commit murder at alarming rates in the U.S.

7. There is evidence that demonstrates that teens murder at a lower rate in other countries compared to the U.S.