



Word power

Raise your game with better vocabulary. Here's how...

It's obvious that if you use better vocabulary you're more likely to get a higher grade. The question is, how? No need to swallow a dictionary: we quote findings from official research to show how small changes can make a big difference.

SAMPLES OF REAL GCSE ENGLISH EXAM WRITING...

HIGHER GRADE

Lurking
Example: Who knows what might lurk around the corner? The high-rise buildings threaten the dark alleys and streets. All is dark and silent.

Terrified
Example: Later that day, I went to Alder Hay Hospital where they gave me a temporary bed. They carried out blood tests to see what was wrong. They said they were going to be a few minutes and as they left, my parents were talking anxiously and I was terrified of what might happen next.

Adjectives used...
 high-rise + dark
 + dark + silent
 = 4

Adverbials used...
 Later that day +
 anxiously + next
 = 5

Very + then = 2

LOWER GRADE

Running Away
Example: When I came out she said she was going to run away and never come back. I just said "yes" and carried on to work. At 6.00 when I come home from work I went in her bedroom and some of her clothes had gone.

Lovely
Example: I was very excited when my mum had a baby and then we found out my sister was pregnant and she's had the baby now and it was a boy and it's weight was 9.9 and he is lovely.

DESCRIPTIVE DETAIL

Higher-grade answers use more words to layer up the descriptive detail.

In **Terrified** the writer describes an emotional response to an event, using the precise adjective "terrified". Compare this with the much blander choice the writer of **Lovely** makes with "lovely". The higher-grade writer of

Terrified mentions lots of details: "Alder Hay Hospital", "bed", "blood tests", "minutes" and "parents". Compare this with the narrow range of detail in **Lovely**: "mum", "baby" (twice), "sister", "boy" and weight.

ACTION

Lower-grade writing doesn't give much

detail about how or when or where the action happens. In **Running Away** the only extra how-when-where detail we get is the thinly descriptive "just". In **Lovely** all we get is a bland "very" and a vague "then". Contrast that with **Terrified**, where we can feel the nerves in "anxiously" and know precisely when with "later that day" and "next".

REVISION IN MINUTES



6
minutes

Turn the lower-grade writing shown here into higher-grade writing, using a better variety of nouns and verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

13
minutes

Have a go at the adverbs and adjectives word games on the BBC Skillswise site; you'll find a link at www.gcsesresult.co.uk

Result!

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- 1) How to tackle fact finding questions for media and non-fiction reading
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