



**STYLE: MAKING DECISION
ABOUT WORDS**
Editing Course

FINDING THE PRECISE WORD

- ...This latest episode of kidnapping and terror has...illustrated once again our [permanent disadvantage]___(x) in dealing with people who do these things and our penchant for [deepening the disadvantage]___(y) by the way we respond. (Greenfield, in Neman, 1989)
- Substitute *disadvantage* with (1) hindrance; (2) obstruction; (3)...
- Substitute the phrases: (1) (x)'steadfast impediment', (y)'enhancing handicap'; (2) (x) 'undeviating obstacle', (y) 'exacerbating the encumbrance'; (3)....



TRY THIS OUT:

- Children are a relatively modern [invention]. (Alexander, in Neman, 1989)
- ...Many of these students maintain a kind of [conspiracy of silence] with men. They [secrete] away some levels of feelings and hopes until it is “too late”. (Goodman, in Neman, 1989).



CHOOSING WORDS FOR EXACT EXPRESSION (DENOTATION)

- Choose the most specific term:
 - Joey took a picture of *an animal* at the zoo.
 - Joey took a picture of *a bear* at the zoo.
 - Joey took a picture of the zoo's *polar bear cub, Whitey*.
- Prefer strong verbs and vivid nouns; be sparing with modifiers.
 - Strong: verbs express actions (*secrete, charge, challenge, etc.*).
 - Weak: linking verbs, must be completed with adjectives or nouns (*is, seem, appear, etc.*)



CHOOSING WORDS FOR APPROPRIATE IMPLICATION (CONNOTATION)

- Formality and informality/Colloquialism
- The Middle Style
- The Learned Style
- Hasten, hurry, snap
- Arduous, difficult, tough
- Peruse, contemplate, study, learn, grind, bone up



CONNOTATION (CONT.)

- Connotation of Value and intensity: positive or negative response?
 - Sagacious, astute, discerning, knowing, shrewd, canny, cunning, sly, slick
- Slant: evaluative outlook of the writer.
 - I am “cautious”; you are “timid; he is “cowardly”
 - Terrorist, fundamentalist, moderate, liberal



PRECISION THROUGH IMAGERY: FOR ABSTRACT THINGS

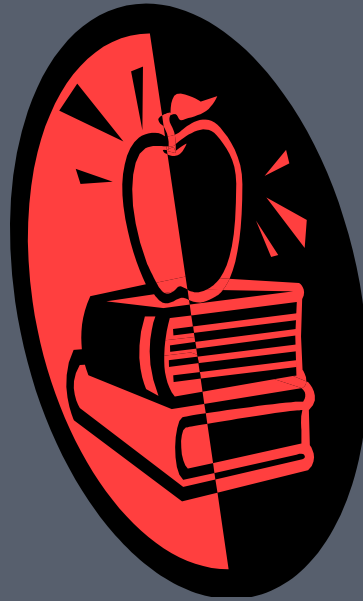
- Objective correlative: something familiar/can be understood by the senses of the (intended) readers.
- Figurative language: metaphor, simile, symbol, etc.



AVOIDING IMPRECISION

- Resisting the desire to be impressive
- Avoid lazy thinking





**ALL THE MATERIALS IN THIS
PRESENTATION ARE TAKEN FROM**

**Neman, Beth. 1989. *Writing Effectively*. 2nd ed.
New York: Harper & Row.**