Use Specific and Accurate Language

1. Focus

Explain Using Specific and Accurate Language

Say: When I write a procedural text, I want to make sure my readers know exactly what to do. I want to use specific and accurate words that show readers how to successfully do whatever my text is about. For example, if I’m telling how to make a sock puppet, I want to use words that precisely describe the size of the sock to use. I want to be descriptive, and I want to use words that help the reader “see” the subject of my text. I want my readers to be able to make a picture in their minds as they read my directions. Today I’m going to show how you can write with specific and accurate language.

Model How Writers Use Specific and Accurate Language

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read the text aloud.

Put the bread on a plate. Next, use the butter knife to spread peanut butter on one slice and jelly on the other slice. Now it’s time for the secret ingredient! Open the cocoa mix packet and sprinkle a pinch of the mix on the peanut butter side.

Modeling Text

Say: The author uses specific language to tell me how to make the sandwich. She tells me specifically what type of knife to use—a butter knife. This is important for me to know, since I shouldn’t use a sharp knife, which wouldn’t work as well and might cut me. I’m going to underline this example of specific language. The author uses the word spread to tell me how to put the peanut butter on the bread. If she didn’t say spread the peanut butter, I might just put a dollop in the middle of the bread. This wouldn’t work very well. She tells me to put peanut butter on one slice and that I have to put jelly on the other slice. I’m going to underline these examples of specific language. When the author tells me to add cocoa, she says to use a pinch. This gives me a clear idea of how much to add. This writer uses very specific and accurate language to describe her procedure.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing with Specific and Accurate Language

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Put the chips in the mix.

Practice Text

Explain that this is one of the steps for making chocolate chip cookies and that it is lacking specific language to help the reader visualize the step and understand exactly what to do. Ask students to work with a partner to add specific and accurate words to this sentence to make the step clearer for readers. Students can add descriptive words to describe the chips, tell how much, and tell what to do with the chips, etc. Each pair of students should write down its sentence and be prepared to read it to the class. Students can explain the word choices they made to use specific and accurate language.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite them to read their sentences aloud and explain the word choices they made. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their own procedural texts.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that using specific and accurate words can show readers what to do in a procedural text. Specific and accurate language is important so that the reader can follow the steps correctly. Remember to use specific language when you write your procedural text.

Encourage students to use specific and accurate words as they draft or revise their procedural texts during independent writing time. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share examples of specific and accurate words they used in their procedural texts.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Use gestures to show the steps in the procedure, for example, spreading the peanut butter, sprinkling the pinch of cocoa powder, flipping over the jelly slice, and munching away. Invite students to use gestures as you read the model text aloud.

Intermediate and Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Encourage pairs to first discuss what they will describe. Supply the following prompts to help them discuss the procedure:

What kind of chips?
What kind of mix?
Where is the mix?
How do you put the chips into the mix?

All Levels
If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: specific/específico(a); precise/preciso(a).