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DATE:

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WORKSHEET for Lesson 8  
PACK POWER IN YOUR PUNCH:  
The Art of Concluding an Essay

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Remember to use blue, green, or purple “ink”! Add lines as needed.

### Part 1: Reading Checkup

This past week I read the following literature (any kind except textbooks):  
(list the title, author, and general amount of time spent—remember, your goal is at least a few minutes per day):

### Part 2: Editing Practice

For this editing exercise, you will edit a short excerpt from the Christian classic *Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis. Your task is to find **eight** mistakes in the poem and fix them by making corrections in red. You may edit the paragraph directly; there is no need to retype it.

Note: The sentences beginning with conjunctions are not mistakes. In conversational writing, which was Lewis’s usual approach, this is an acceptable stylistic choice. Also, at the end you will see the word “funk” used in an unfamiliar way. This is a British verb; it is not a mistake.

Teachers will tell you that the laziest boy in the class is the one whom works the hardest in the end. They mean this. If you give two boys say a proposition in geometry to do, the one who is prepared to take trouble will try and understand it. The lazy boy will learn it by heart because, for the moment, that needs less effort. But six months later, when they are preparing for the exam, that lazy boy is doing hours and hours of miserable drugery over things the other boy understands and positively enjoys in a few minutes.

Laziness means more work in the long run. Or look at it this way. In a battle, or in mountain climbing, there is often one thing which it takes a lot of pluck to do; but it is

also, in the long run, the safest thing to do. If you funk it, you will find yourself hours later in far worse danger. The cowardly thing are also the most dangerous thing.

--C.S. Lewis, from *Mere Christianity*

### Part 3: Style Splash—Strong Verbs:

I am almost certain that you learned about verbs a long time ago. You know that verbs express action or a state of being, and you can probably identify them in a sentence without much effort. This style lesson is not about improving your grammar knowledge, though; it's about using that knowledge with finesse.

Improving your use of action verbs is one of the best ways you can improve your writing style. You could argue that we should focus more on using nouns well, because they are the most important part of speech in a sentence. After all, we cannot have a sentence without a noun in it, but we can have a sentence without action ("I am happy," for example. When it comes to effective, memorable writing, however, the true power of an action sentence lies in the verb. More than specific nouns and vivid adjectives, both of which we will discuss in future style lessons, the verb is the part of the sentence that does the most to capture the reader's imagination.

Doubtful? Take a look at these examples of weak action sentences:

- The old man walked to the park and sat on a bench.
- My friend ran into me with his football, making me fall to the ground.
- Dogs like to lie down near a fireplace on a cold night and eat a bone.

Here are these same sentences with strong verbs:

- The old man shuffled to the park and eased himself onto a bench.
- My friend tackled me with his football.
- Dogs like to loungue near a fireplace on a cold night and gnaw on a bone.

Strong verbs will give your writing an energy that will help your readers not only see the actions in it more clearly but will also help them engage more with what you have to say. They will also help you trim extra words, as you can see in the second example, sharpening your reader's vision and quickening the pace of your writing.

Of course, sometimes you will write essays and papers that don't allow for much action. Perhaps the ideas you have to convey are more abstract and scholarly. Even so, you can still be choosy about your verbs. Whenever you can reduce a verb phrase down to a single verb, you will strengthen that sentence. Whenever you can use a strong verb that awakens the imagination, rather than a vague, general one, you will strengthen that sentence. Even in sentences with little action, you can ask yourself whether you

might choose a better verb to express your idea more specifically (like “dash,” instead of “run”). When you are discussing difficult concepts, this may be especially important for helping your readers understand what you are trying to say.

Of course, you don’t want to overdo strong verbs, just as you don’t want to overdo anything. As with all writing concepts, there are exceptions to the rule. Sometimes a weak verb *is* your best stylistic choice *for that sentence*. You will have to be the judge. When you do face that choice, though, put on your artist’s hat and view the sentence for not only correctness, but also for style and beauty. Take a moment to think through the alternatives, and choose wisely.

### **Try it yourself!**

For each of the 10 sentences below, study the verb(s) that have been underlined. Next to the sentence you will be told whether the verb is weak or strong. If the verb is weak, provide an alternative *strong* verb that would improve the sentence. If it is already strong, type a *weak* counterpart to that verb.

Note: Remember that moving from a weak to a strong verb often means reducing the number of words in the sentence. Also remember that moving from a strong verb to a weak verb often means expanding the number of words. It is okay to rewrite the sentence to adjust for the alternative verb.

1) The cyclist went up the mountain. (weak)

Answer:

2) Rainbows come into the sky after a rain shower. (weak)

Answer:

3) I crave hamburgers and French fries sometimes. (strong)

Answer:

4) When do you want to go to the beach? (weak)

Answer:

5) Growing vegetables requires a lot of time and patience. (strong)

Answer:

6) How a child gets the knowledge and skills to read is sometimes a difficult process.

(weak)

Answer:

7) Fast music always makes my dog jump around the room and make high-pitched noises like a wolf. (weak)

Answer:

8) In Colorado, hiking “a 14-er” is a popular pastime. (strong)

Answer:

9) Someday I would like to drive in no particular direction to no particular place through the United States in an RV for a few months. (weak)

Answer:

10) The dancer finished his performance by soaring across the stage in split-leaps and then spinning four times in the air. (strong)

Answer:

## Part 4: Lesson Exercises

In lesson 7 you created a detailed plan and introductory paragraph for a thesis statement of your choice. Now you will write a possible concluding paragraph for this planned essay. You do not need to write the entire essay in order to do this. Remember that your concluding paragraph circles back to your introductory paragraph, revisiting (not repeating!) the main idea and making a point of some kind. Although you have not written the body, you should have a good idea of the ideas it might contain.

Copy your introduction and outline here:

Write your conclusion here:

Write the type of conclusion you chose here:

Now choose another thesis statement from any of your past assignments or journal entries. If you prefer, you may revise an old one or write a new one. Then, using all you have learned in this unit and in level 1, **plan and write** a 3-4 paragraph essay (rough draft) that includes a full concluding paragraph (three or more sentences).

I will grade you on the following criteria:

- all required prewriting included and formatted correctly
- a full introductory paragraph, including a hook, thesis statement, and projected plan (either rolled in or separated from the thesis)
- a full concluding paragraph that revisits the main idea and is of one of the types discussed in this lesson.

I will not grade you on the body, except to see that it follows your outline. Add lines as needed. If you prefer to handwrite any of your prewriting, you may scan and share a PDF on Drive instead of copying it below.

Thesis statement:

PLACE YOUR THESIS STATEMENT HERE.

Blocking:

BLOCK YOUR PAPER HERE

Detailed outline (either formal or functional):

PLACE YOUR OUTLINE HERE

Essay:

PLACE YOUR FULL ESSAY HERE