Misused Words: Synonyms for “Said”

Have you found that you are overusing the word “said”? Do you want to give more meaning, action, and emotion to the dialogue in your writing? Do you want to use more descriptive words in your essays? Simply replacing the word “said” with one of the following synonyms could give your writing the “extra kick” you’re looking for.

Acknowledged  Boasted  Demurred
Acquiesced  Bragged  Denied
Added  Brought forth  Denounced
Addressed  Called  Described
Admitted  Cautioned  Dictated
Admonished  Charged  Directed
Advised  Chided  Disclosed
Advocated  Cited  Disrupted
Affirmed  Claimed  Divulged
Agreed  Commanded  Drawled
Alleged  Commented  Droned
Allowed  Complained  Elaborated
Announced  Conceded  Enjoined
Answered  Concluded  Enjoined
Approved  Condescended  Entreated
Argued  Confessed  Enunciated
Asked  Confided  Estimated
Assented  Consented  Exclaimed
Asserted  Contended  Explained
Assumed  Contested  Exposed
Assured  Continued  Expressed
Attested  Contradicted  Faltered
Avowed  Counseled  Feared
Babbled  Countered  Foretold
Bantered  Cracked  Fumed
Bargained  Cried  Gasped
Barked  Debated  Giggled
Began  Decided  Granted
Begged  Declared  Grinned
Bellowed  Decreed  Groaned
Beseched  Demanded  Growled
Grumbled  Narrated  Reiterated
Grunted  Noted  Rejoiced
Haggled  Notified  Related
Hedged  Objected  Related
Held  Observed  Relented
Hesitated  Opined  Remarked
Hinted  Orated  Reminded
Howled  Ordered  Remonstrated
Imparted  Petitioned  Repeated
Implied  Pledged  Replied
Implored  Pled  Reported
Indicated  Pointed out  Reprimanded
Inferred  Prayed  Requested
Informed  Predicted  Responded
Inquired  Proclaimed  Restated
Insinuated  Professed  Resumed
Insisted  Prompted  Retorted
Instructed  Pronounced  Returned
Interjected  Proposed  Revealed
Interrogated  Propounded  Roared
Intimidated  Protested  Ruled
Itemized  Proved  Sanctioned
Jested  Publicized  Scoffed
Judged  Queried  Scolded
Lamented  Questioned  Screamed
Laughed  Quibbled  Shouted
Lectured  Quipped  Shrieked
Lied  Quoted  Snapped
Lisped  Rambled  Sneered
Listed  Ranted  Sobbed
Made known  Reaffirmed  Solicited
Maintained  Reasoned  Specified
Mentioned  Reassured  Spoke
Mimicked  Reciprocated  Sputtered
Manned  Recited  Stammered
Mumbled  Recommended  Stated
Murmured  Recounted  Stipulated
Mused  Referred  Stormed
Muttered  Refuted  Stressed
Nagged  Regretted  Stuttered
Suggested | Upbraided | Wept  
---|---|---
Taunted  | Urged  | Whimpered  
Testified  | Uttered  | Whistled  
Thought  | Vowed  | Whooped  
Threatened  | Wailed  | Wrangled  
Told  | Warned  | Yelled  
Twitted  | Went on  

**Substituting for “Said”**

Each of the above words, when used in the place of “said,” will make your writing much more concrete and vivid. Take the following sentence, for example:

> “I will love you until the end of time,” John said.

*versus*

> “I will love you until the end of time,” John vowed.

Simply by replacing “said” with “vowed,” I have made the second sentence much more meaningful than the first.

Here is another example:

> “I think you had better go now,” Cindy said.

*versus*

> “I think you had better go now,” Cindy snapped.

In the first sentence, readers have no hint at what Cindy is feeling when she speaks. In the second sentence, readers can sense a hint of anger and intensity in Cindy’s voice.

Choosing more concrete synonyms for “said” can also strengthen your academic writing, as shown in the following example:

> “An anonymous source admitted that the company had actually been losing profit for years and remarked that the reason for the loss was the poor judgment of the CEO.”

The words “admitted” and “remarked” both carry more weight than the word “said.” *To say* simply means to say, but *to admit* and *to remark* both mean to say in a distinct and specific way.
**Activity 1**

Using the context clues in each sentence, fill in each blank with the appropriate synonym for “said” from the list below.

- objected
- questioned
- described
- professed
- directed
- confessed
- hinted
- began
- decided
- nagged

1. “Well, you see,” Julie __________, “It all started like this.”
2. Joseph __________ that the Industrial Revolution was a time of growth and change in America.
3. Carol __________ whether or not she was making the right decision.
4. “You haven’t taken the trash out yet,” Lizzie __________.
5. The employee __________ that he had been taking naps under the bar on his breaks.
6. “I will not stand for this!” Jason __________.
7. In the story of Oedipus, the oracle __________ that Oedipus would kill his father and marry his mother.
8. “I supposed I will go to the movie after all,” Andrea __________.
9. “You, take the cake out of the oven. You, frost it,” the baker __________.
10. The author __________ that there would be a sequel to the novel.

**Activity 2**

Often, more than one synonym for said will work in a sentence. In the next exercise, select up to three synonyms for said that you think are appropriate to fill in the blank. Following the exercise, you will find some suggested answers. Keep in mind that these answers are only some of the many possibilities.

1. Roger __________ that it would be a bad idea to leave the stove on all day.
2. “Please, don’t make me go,” Carla __________.
3. “I don’t want to eat here! This has to be the worst restaurant in all of San Jose,” Matthew __________.
4. “Even though I don’t like it, I guess you might be correct,” Sharon __________.
5. “I’m n-n-not so sure that w-w-we should go in there,” Shaggy __________.
6. Experts on the matter have __________ that a sufficient amount of evidence exists to prove the existence of Bigfoot.
7. “I am so angry with you, I hope that you never speak to me again!” Albert __________.
8. Many prospective jurors have __________ that the death penalty is a cruel and unusual punishment.

**Answer Key for Activity 1**

1. began
2. described
3. questioned
4. nagged
5. confessed
6. objected
7. professed
8. decided
9. directed
10. hinted

Answer Key for Activity 2

1. insisted, pointed out, warned
2. groaned, pleaded, begged
3. complained, protested, ranted, objected
4. agreed, assented, conceded
5. murmured, stammered, hesitated
6. debated, argued, contended
7. roared, shouted, exclaimed, growled
8. argued, proclaimed, opined