

# Do A Verb– Verbs are the muscle of writing, more powerful than nouns, adjectives. (Adverbs are flabby).

Writing is a sensual art form. Mostly we describe what we see, but also what we hear, smell, feel, and taste.

Show don’t tell. The right verb is the strongest route to fulfill this cardinal rule of writing.

Kinesthetic or physical knowledge of (these locomotor) verbs (run, walk, etc.) will assure their usage.

1. Do a verb. Teacher enacts the first ones as examples. Or, with prompting, has students enact them.

Skip, dart, march, scurry – Do they suggest fast or slow? Happy or sad?

Are other emotions attached to any of these verbs?

For each verb ask class, **Who** might skip**?** And **why?** Or **when?** Or **where?**

Brainstorm. Do each verb separately. The enactor enacts verb and makes a sentence. Class makes sentences.

Samples: The freshman girl skipped down the hall with her report card. (implied: why)

The hound darted, turned, darted, swiveled, and darted after the ground squirrel. (why)

He marched with the band. She marched in the colorguard. They marched in the parade.

(Good, those all originate from military marching. Take it away from military. Who else?)

Young man, you march right upstairs to your bedroom until you’ve cooled off. (Still military? Interesting)

Hint: What animal scurries? (Mouse) Why? (timid, shy) And a person? (guilty, scared, tardy/late)

When Mom yelled the third time, he scurried to set the table. (tells why)

shuffle, trudge, and/or waddle - Do they suggest fast or slow? Happy or sad? Other emotion suggested?

Prompt: **Who** might shuffle? And **why**? Or **when**? Or **where?** Make a sentences, one verb at a time.

Prompts to your students: Who might shuffle? (old person)

Who might trudge?(unhappy, reluctant, labored)

What animal waddles? (Goose, duck) Why? (Legs set far back on body).

Samples: Wearing her worn robe, Grandma **shuffled** into the kitchen to boil an egg.

Carrying his lunch in a bucket, every day Uncle Joe **trudged** to the coal mine. Or

He trudged through the blizzard to get to the barn.

Mom **waddled** into the hospital, nine months pregnant.

Suggest a sample then let students try. Guide them. Ask questions. Correct use is of utmost importance.

Continue to guide them. Question them. Dictionary use is encouraged.

Cut adverbs. Adverbs are flabby. They’re redundant if you have a good verb and have set up your character.

Sample: He **gingerly** scurried to set the table. What word don’t we need? Right, the adverb, gingerly.

Locomotive Verbs: (you can make flash cards and laminate them) (or just slips of paper)

Amble, Bound, Barrel, Dash, Dart, Float, Fly, Hasten, Hop, Inch, Jump, Leap, March, Meander, Race, Ramble, Sail, Saunter, Scamper, Scurry, Scuttle, Scutter, Shuffle, Skim, Skip, Stroll, Strut, Tear, Tramp, Trudge, Wander, Whisk, Wriggle

Hand out a flash card or a written verb to each student. (“Don’t show your verbs to others”). Some of these verbs might require “consultation” with you, the teacher; or dictionary use; brainstorming; volunteers. Always they require imagination.

For instance: He **wriggled** through the hole and found himself in the giant’s inner ear. (answers: where)

Teacher can give hints to both enactor and class. (What animal would move this way?)

Give everyone a chance to move. You learn the verb when you **DO THE VERB.**

Use a mix of both easy verbs and harder verbs so they experience both success and challenge.

Enact. Guess. Both enactor and alass members make sentences telling answering the who/why/where/when questions. You know they understand the verb by the sentences they try.

For younger students, You might want to provide the first half of the sentence with verb and let them come up with the clause that shows they understand.

You might want to assign a “secretary” to take down the class’s sentences (so you can remind class what they learned together.)

Have each student write down his/her sentence. Use it as a **prompt** to write a story or a scene. It might be the 1st sentence or an interior sentence.

Once you’ve done this as a session, or done a few such sessions, you can use it when you have 5 minutes at the end of a class period, for fun and renewal of the vocabulary.

Have students come up with their own verbs to enact. They make sentence. Class makes sentences.

---

Locomotive verbs aren’t the only verbs to use for “Do A Verb”—they’re just a family of verbs to start with.

Another fun “family” of verbs is transitive verbs—a great way to build imagination and a writing prompt.

Transitive verb list: cost, read, send, sing, writes, make, promise, show, take, tell

She plays the piano, guitar, tennis, baseball, cards…(those are regular).

She plays…(insert outrageous idea here)

One throws a ball, a tantrum, a fit, paper airplane…(those are all regular)

The outrageous example? Consider the first sentence of Carolyn Coman’s *What Jamie Saw,* Newbery Honor Winner 1996. “When Jamie saw him throw the baby, saw Van throw the little baby, saw Van throw his little sister Nin, when Jamie saw Van throw his baby sister Nin, then they moved.” Wow. That wakes you up. A great book.

Sample: The Mother’s Day gift cost him all the pictures he’d drawn since kindergarten, but it was worth it.