Words That Work

Choose precise, concise language for a credible public message.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.3 "Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three words or phrases that make Maya's ideas precise. Circle the vague wording in her first draft, then number your three underlined examples.

A Cooler Block

1 On a July afternoon, Maya checked temperatures along three blocks near her apartment. The asphalt beside a parking lot measured 118 degrees Fahrenheit, while a shaded sidewalk measured 91 degrees. The difference was not a mystery. Dark pavement absorbs sunlight and releases heat slowly, so neighborhoods with few trees often stay warmer after sunset. Researchers call this pattern the urban heat island effect. Maya decided to present the findings to the city council, but she needed language that was exact, not dramatic.

2 Her first draft said, "Our streets are super hot, and that is really bad for everyone." The sentence sounded urgent, but it gave the council little useful information. Maya revised it: "Blocks with broad tree canopies remain cooler because leaves shade pavement and release water vapor." The revision named the locations, described the cause, and avoided a vague claim. She also cut the phrase "in my personal opinion." Her temperature readings and photographs already showed that she had gathered the evidence herself.

3 At the meeting, Maya did not promise that planting a few trees would solve every heat problem. Instead, she proposed a pilot project: plant shade trees beside the playground, measure surface temperatures for one summer, and compare the results with an unshaded area. The phrase "pilot project" signaled a limited test, not a guaranteed solution. By choosing specific nouns and measured claims, Maya made her request sound credible. The council asked the parks department to estimate costs and identify possible planting sites.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which vague phrase appears in Maya's first draft? Copy the more precise sentence that replaces it.

2. Why is "pilot project" a more careful choice than saying the tree planting will solve every heat problem?

3. Maya cuts the phrase "in my personal opinion." What evidence in the passage makes that phrase unnecessary?

4. What two precise verbs describe what the parks department will do?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence proposal to improve one place at your school. Use at least two specific nouns, two precise verbs, and a number or time limit. Keep your language concise, and do not promise a guaranteed result.

ANSWER KEY

Words That Work

GRADE 8 · L.8.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three words or phrases that make Maya's ideas precise. Circle the vague wording in her first draft, then number your three underlined examples. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which vague phrase appears in Maya's first draft? Copy the more precise sentence that replaces it.	**Vague phrase: "super hot." More precise sentence: "Blocks with broad tree canopies remain cooler because leaves shade pavement and release water vapor."**
2	Why is "pilot project" a more careful choice than saying the tree planting will solve every heat problem?	**It shows that Maya is proposing a limited test, not promising a guaranteed solution.**
3	Maya cuts the phrase "in my personal opinion." What evidence in the passage makes that phrase unnecessary?	**Her temperature readings and photographs show that she gathered evidence herself.**
4	What two precise verbs describe what the parks department will do?	**"Estimate" costs and "identify" possible planting sites.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our student council should install two refill stations near the gym and library. The stations could reduce bottle-bin totals by 20 percent during one semester and provide cold water during practice. Afterward, custodians could compare bottle-bin totals with this year's totals to judge the project.

Accept other accurately copied precise phrases for the marking job, such as "118 degrees Fahrenheit," "broad tree canopies," or "surface temperatures." For the proposal, accept varied topics if the response has exactly three sentences and includes the required specific language, precise verbs, and number or time limit.