Words That Work

Study how precise language strengthens a proposal.

9.4.W.1 "Students will use precise, grade-level vocabulary in writing to clearly communicate complex ideas."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three precise words or phrases that explain how rainwater moves or is managed, and circle two phrases that keep the proposal's claims realistic.

A Rain Garden at Arroyo High

1 After a heavy storm, the corner outside Arroyo High becomes a shallow lake. Rain runs off the roof and parking lot, carrying oil and grit toward a street drain. The school could replace a strip of pavement with a rain garden, a planted area that collects runoff. Calling the change "more greenery" misses its purpose. The garden's shallow basin would slow the water, while its soil would absorb some of it before it reached the drain. This proposal targets a specific drainage problem, not a general lack of plants near the school.

2 A rain garden is not a bottomless sponge. During a long storm, its soil can become saturated, meaning it cannot take in water as quickly. An overflow channel would then direct excess water toward the existing drain rather than letting it spill across the walkway. The garden would also need maintenance: workers would clear litter from the basin and remove sediment that builds up near the inlet. These details matter because a clogged inlet could keep runoff from entering the garden at all. A useful proposal names the conditions under which its design might fail.

3 The school should test the idea on one corner before replacing more pavement. Staff could compare how long puddles remain at that corner before and after construction, using the same observation method after similar storms. That comparison would not prove the garden prevents every flood, but it could show whether the garden reduces standing water at the entrance. If water still pools along the walkway, staff could adjust the inlet or add a second collection area. Describing a measurable reduction in puddles is more honest, and more useful, than promising to "fix flooding" forever.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why is "runoff" more precise than "water" when describing what the garden collects? Use details from paragraph 1.

2. Which word in paragraph 2 describes soil that cannot take in water as quickly? Explain how that word clarifies the need for an overflow channel.

3. Why is "maintenance" not specific enough on its own to describe the work required? Give two precise actions from paragraph 2.

4. Why is "reduces standing water at the entrance" more accurate than "fix flooding" for the proposed test? Include what staff would measure.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences proposing a way your school could reduce cafeteria food waste. Name one specific change, explain how it would work, identify a limitation, and suggest an adjustment using precise vocabulary.

ANSWER KEY

Words That Work

GRADE 9 · 9.4.W.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three precise words or phrases that explain how rainwater moves or is managed, and circle two phrases that keep the proposal's claims realistic. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why is "runoff" more precise than "water" when describing what the garden collects? Use details from paragraph 1.	**"Runoff" identifies rain flowing off the roof and parking lot toward the drain, rather than water in general.**
2	Which word in paragraph 2 describes soil that cannot take in water as quickly? Explain how that word clarifies the need for an overflow channel.	**"Saturated" describes the soil. When it cannot take in water quickly enough, the channel directs excess water toward the drain.**
3	Why is "maintenance" not specific enough on its own to describe the work required? Give two precise actions from paragraph 2.	**The word does not identify the tasks: workers must clear litter from the basin and remove sediment near the inlet.**
4	Why is "reduces standing water at the entrance" more accurate than "fix flooding" for the proposed test? Include what staff would measure.	**Staff would measure how long puddles remain after similar storms. That comparison could show a reduction at the entrance, but it could not prove the garden prevents every flood.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The cafeteria could offer smaller default portions of cooked vegetables while allowing students to request seconds. This portion policy could reduce untouched food thrown away after lunch without limiting students who want more. However, the serving line might slow down if many students return for seconds. A separate pickup point for extra portions could prevent that delay while staff track how much food is discarded.

Accept other accurate passage details in the short answers. For the open task, look for four sentences with a specific change, a clear mechanism, a plausible limitation, and an adjustment described in precise terms.