

Using Strong Verbs – Suggested Answers and Teaching Tips, Worksheet 1

1. Janet Smith is the supervisor of the customer service department.

Answer: Janet Smith supervises the customer service department.

Teaching Tip: The solution here is fairly straightforward. 1. Look for a verb “to be” (is). 2. Look for a noun that may serve as a verb (supervisor). 3. Turn the noun into a verb (supervises). Look for students to maintain consistency of tense with the original. Some students will write “supervised” because they may be more comfortable using the past tense than the present. They should use “supervises.”

2. Walt Disney was the initiator of a mass movement in family entertainment.

Answer: Walt Disney initiated a mass movement in family entertainment.

Teaching Tip: Sometimes I have the students actually circle the verb “to be” (was) and write the tense at the top (past). The first two sentences are fairly simple, but crucial for students to understand this concept.

3. The whole house was stressed and angry with one another over my parents’ fighting over the bills.

Answer: The whole house seethed with stress and anger over my parents’ fighting over bills.

Answer: The whole house stressed with anger over my parents’ fighting over bills.

Answer: The entire household feared my parents’ fighting over bills.

Teaching Tip: This sentence is somewhat more troublesome than the first two because we have a linking verb and two predicate adjectives (stressed and angry). Students may find several creative ways to rewrite this sentence. As long as they use a strong verb and maintain the basic meaning of the sentence, most answers should be fine.

4. In the distance there is a giant eruption from the water, as a 100-pound sailfish jumps out.

Answer: In the distance a 100-pound sailfish erupts from the water.

Answer: In the distance a 100-pound sailfish jumps from the water.

Answer: A 100-pound sailfish erupts from the water.

Teaching Tip: Several responses are fine. I encourage students to couch their responses with words from the original sentence. The key is to eliminate the weak verb (is) and to convert a noun into a strong verb.

5. Jenny Millhouse is the owner of two gas stations in Florida City.

Answer: Jenny Millhouse owns two gas stations in Florida City.

6. The sugar cane refinery is the employer that is the driving force for employment in south central Florida.

Answer: The sugar cane refinery drives employment in south central Florida.

Teaching Tip: Students find this sentence tricky because some do not think of taking "driving force" and turning it into the noun "drives." Mention how the words "is the employer" are redundant. The mere mention of "sugar cane refinery" implies "employer."

7. The student who is responsible for conducting the survey and reporting the results to the school administration is James Archer.

Answer: James Archer conducts the survey and reports the results to the school administration.

Answer: James Archer will conduct the survey and report the results to the school administration.

Teaching Tip: Here we are confronted with some redundancy. By this time, most students will recognize "The student who is responsible for" as redundant. Students should recognize that they may eliminate most instances of "is responsible for" and simply state the task that the person does. In a sense, doing implies responsibility.

8. If a manager is thinking about changing a policy statement, she has the responsibility of informing both her immediate supervisor and her employees.

Answer: If a manager changes (thinks about changing) a policy statement, she must inform both her immediate supervisor and her employees.

Teaching Tip: This sentence gives students the opportunity to rephrase using strong verbs in two clauses. Most will see it, but some will revise only one clause. Stress the need to look at the entire sentence.

9. The shipped product was different from the one that was advertised in the catalog.

Answer: The shipped product differed from the one advertised in the catalog.

Teaching Tip: Here is a challenging sentence because some students do not recognize "differ" as a verb.

10. The Foster family has a fruit stand near Krome Avenue.

Answer: The Foster family owns a fruit stand near Krome Avenue.

Teaching Tip: I love to tell students, "In writing, as in life, less is more." This sentence provides an example where a good editing of the sentence (changing "has" to "owns") does not result in a sentence with fewer words.

11. After a questionable call at home plate, the manager had an argument with the umpire.

Answer: After a questionable call at home plate, the manager argued with the umpire.

Teaching Tip: The key to this sentence is taking "had an argument" (notice – past tense) and converting it to the verb "argued."

12. Last week, the class had a discussion about Kate Chopin's novel The Awakening.

Answer: Last week, the class discussed Kate Chopin's novel The Awakening.

Teaching Tip: Same as 11.

Using Strong Verbs – Suggested Answers and Teaching Tips, Worksheet 2

Rewrite each sentence to make the main verb stronger.

1. Larissa is a student of history and psychology.

Answer: Larissa **studies** history and psychology.

2. Professor Rose does not agree with Professor Randall about the uneven distribution of grades in the freshman class.

Answer: Professor Rose **disagrees** with Professor Randall about the uneven distribution of grades in the freshman class.

3. Because Janice is prone to stay away from social gatherings, she spends many evenings alone in her dorm room.

Answer: Because Janice **avoids** social gatherings, she spends many evenings alone in her dorm room.

4. Miss Lawson made a drawing of a herd of bison stampeding across the plains.

Answer: Miss Lawson **drew** a herd of bison stampeding across the plains.

5. Louis was The Cowardly Lion in the school production of The Wizard of Oz.

Answer: Louis played the role of The Cowardly Lion in the school production of The Wizard of Oz.

6. If someone says something bad about you, you should not say something bad about that person.

Answer 1: If someone lies about you, you should not lie about that person.

Answer 2: If someone spreads rumors about you, you should not spread rumors about that person.

Answer 3: If someone villifies you, you should not villify that person.

Teaching Tip: Something in me wants to write "in return" at the end of each sentence, but I am resisting the urge.

7. The male anglerfish feels attraction for the female angler because of the pheromones the female produces.

Answer 1: Pheromones produced by the female anglerfish attract the male.

Answer 2: The female anglerfish attracts the male with pheromones the female produces.

Answer 3: The male anglerfish is attracted to the female angler by pheromones the female produces.

Teaching Tip: Ask students to resist the urge to use the pronoun "she" for the female of any animal species. The pronoun she is normally reserved for humans. The first answer is the shortest of the three, but the focus is on the pheromones, not the female (or male) angler. Student should consider what they want the focus of the sentence to be.

8. There were so many dance practices that my feet hurt every night.

Answer 1: We practiced our dance routines so much that my feet hurt every night.

Answer 2: Our dance troupe practiced so much that my feet hurt every night.

9. Monica was waiting impatiently at the airport for her sister to arrive from Paris.

Answer 1: Monica waited impatiently at the airport for her sister to arrive from Paris.

Answer 2: Monica fidgeted in her seat at the terminal, waiting for her sister to arrive from Paris.

Answer 3: Monica paced around the terminal repeatedly, waiting for her sister to arrive from Paris.

Teaching Tip: Answer 1 is an improvement, but we really want the students to look for verbs or actions that suggest the adverb "impatiently."

10. The intended purpose of the lecture was to teach students effective time management.

Answer 1: The lecture intended to teach students effective time management.

Answer 2: The lecture purported to teach students effective time management.

Answer 3: The purpose of the lecture was to teach students effective time management.

Teaching Tip: While one could quibble that it is a "lecturer" and not a "lecture" that "intends to teach students" anything, answer one still seems perfectly fine to me. The original sentence waddles along, bloated with words that don't add meaning. Answer 3 is fine but weak. It remains, however, more effective than the original. Point out to students that "intended" and "purpose" are redundant.

11. The Arsht Center in Miami has plays, ballets, and concerts every month.

Answer 1: The Arsht Center in Miami hosts plays, ballets, and concerts every month.

Answer 2: The Arsht Center in Miami stages plays, ballets, and concerts every month.

Answer 3: The Arsht Center in Miami features plays, ballets, and concerts every month.

Teaching Tip: The verb “has” is weak. Look for a play that more accurately describes what the center actually does with plays, ballets, and concerts.

12. There was a display of contemporary abstract art at the campus gallery.

Answer 1: The campus gallery featured a display of contemporary abstract art.

Answer 2: The campus gallery featured contemporary abstract art.

Answer 3: The campus gallery displayed contemporary abstract art.

Teaching Tip: In general, avoid starting sentences with “There was,” “There were,” and “There is.” There may be a subtle difference between featuring a display of contemporary abstract art and “featuring abstract art” and “displaying abstract art.” I generally advise the shortest response, but in this case, answer 1 seems more true to the original meaning than the other two.

13. Dunkin Donuts has exhibited perseverance throughout the years, in spite of the many ups and downs of the economy, since it was founded in 1950.

Answer 1: Since its founding in 1950, Dunkin Donuts perseveres despite the many ups and downs of the economy.

Answer 2: Dunkin Donuts has persevered, in spite of the many ups and downs of the economy, since it was founded in 1950.

Teaching Tip: The word “perseverance” implies “throughout the years. Answer 1 is better than answer 2, but any variant of 2 is fine. The present perfect tense, which uses the auxiliary “has” is appropriate, since the writer discusses a company that continues to function since its founding in 1950.

14. Jack Lalanne was a promoter of health and fitness through his lifestyle and the sale of his Jack Lalanne Power Juicer.

Answer 1: Jack Lalanne promoted health and fitness through his lifestyle and the sale of his Jack Lalanne Power Juicer.

Teaching Tip: The suggested answer shortens length by 3 words.

“was a promoter of” → “promoted”

15. The budget committee came up with an approximation of the costs of building a new stadium.

Answer 1: The budget committee approximated the costs of building a new stadium.

16. Dr. Brene Brown has a theory that when people avoid vulnerability, the also stop emotional growth.

Answer 1: Dr. Brene Brown theorizes that when people avoid vulnerability, the also stop emotional growth.

Answer 2: Dr. Brene Brown theorizes that when people avoid vulnerability, the also stop growing emotionally.

Answer 3: Dr. Brene Brown claims that people stop growing emotionally when they avoid vulnerability.

Teaching Tip: It's always hard to summarize a researcher's theories in a tight little sentence. The key is to notice the verb "has" in the original and that "theory" is a noun that could be a verb. Almost any verb of attribution works well here. I prefer answer 3 because it has a pleasing rhythm; it "quicker" than the other two.

17. Penelope Trunk is a blogger who writes about work, relationships, and parenting.

Answer 1: In her blog, Penelope Trunk writes about work, relationships, and parenting.

Answer 2: Penelope Trunk writes about work, relationships, and parenting.

Answer 3: Penelope Trunk blogs about work, relationships, and parenting.

Answer 4: Penelope Trunk discusses work, relationships, and parenting in her blog.

Teaching Tip: Answer 3 is way too techie for me. I know that "blogs" is now accepted as a verb, but I don't like it – much. Answer 1 is prosaic, safe, and old-fashioned. Maybe that's why it seems like the best answer.

Many constructions of the form "is a xxxxxxx who" can be converted by taking the xxxxxxx and turning it into a verb. For example,

"Hooly Gill is a folk singer who performs in clubs around Jacksonville."

Strong Verb Form: Hooly Gill sings folk songs in clubs around Jacksonville.