

# UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

## ACTIVE VERBS FOR DISCUSSING IDEAS

Active verbs are important components of any academic writing! Just as in other forms of writing, they work as engines, driving the action of your sentences in many potentially vivid, clear, and colorful ways. Instead of opting for bland, unspecific expressions (“says,” “writes about,” “believes,” “states”) consider using more vivid or nuanced verbs such as “argues,” “insists,” “explains,” “emphasizes,” “challenges,” “agrees,” etc. The list below offers dozens of such verbs that will help you communicate your ideas and the ideas of others more clearly, expressively, and powerfully.

accepts	confirms	endorses	interprets
acknowledges	conflates	enumerates	intimates
adds	confronts	exaggerates	judges
admires	confuses	experiences	lists
affirms	considers	experiments	maintains
allows that	contradicts	explains	marshals
analyzes	contrasts	exposes	narrates
announces	convinces	facilitates	negates
answers	criticizes	formulates	observes
argues	critiques	grants	outlines
assaults	declares	guides	parses
assembles	defends	handles	perceives
asserts	defies	hesitates	persists
assists	demands	highlights	persuades
buttresses	denies	hints	pleads
categorizes	describes	hypothesizes	points out
cautions	determines	identifies	postulates
challenges	diminishes	illuminates	praises
claims	disagrees	implies	proposes
clarifies	discusses	infers	protects
compares	disputes	informs	provides
complicates	disregards	initiates	qualifies
concludes	distinguishes	insinuates	ratifies
condemns	emphasizes	insists	rationalizes

reads	responds	states ( <i>but don't</i>	tests
reconciles	retorts	<i>overuse</i> )	toys with
reconsiders	reveals	stresses	treats
refutes	reviews	substitutes	uncovers
regards	seeks	suggests	undermines
rejects	sees	summarizes	urges
relinquishes	shares	supplements	verifies
reminds	shifts	supplies	warns
repudiates	shows	supports	
resolves	simplifies	synthesizes	

### Words to Avoid

- **“mentions,”** unless you mean “refer to something briefly and without going into detail.”\*
- **“notion”** as a synonym for “idea” implies “impulsive,” “whimsical,” not well considered.\*

\*New Oxford American Dictionary

Credit: Adapted from a list by Cinthia Gannett by Doug Kirshen and Robert B. Cochran, Brandeis University Writing Program, 2020.

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