

Replacing General Nouns with Specific Nouns



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Get the name of the dog. These words of wisdom are passed down to writers of all ages, even professional ones. Specific nouns do a better job of telling a story than general ones do. For example, "Max, a golden retriever, curled up comfortably on his favorite sofa cushion" paints a clearer picture than "the dog curled up comfortably on his favorite spot."

A **specific noun** is a word that names a certain person, place, thing, or idea. Replacing general nouns with specific ones will make your writing clearer and more vivid for your readers.

	Person	Place	Thing	Idea
General	girl	spot	dog	fashion
More Specific	neighbor	planet	golden retriever	clothes

Most Specific	Kate Vincent	Mars	Max	tuxedo
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When you revise your writing, search for general nouns and replace them with specific ones. Here's how one writer improved her paragraph by replacing general nouns with specific ones.

Original:

The **war** stretched to different **states** and down across the **border**. The war began in the northeast corner of Mexico, in a dispute over the border of Texas. The **president** sent a **general** and 3,000 **men** to march from one **river** to **another**, taking over disputed **areas** in the process.

Revised:

The **Mexican-American War** stretched from **Texas** to **California** and down to **Mexico City**. The war began in the northeast corner of Mexico, in a dispute over the border of Texas. **President James Polk** sent **General Zachary Taylor** and 3,000 **soldiers** to march from the **Nueces River** to the **Rio Grande River**, taking over disputed **territory** in the process.

Your Turn Fill in the missing spaces in the chart with more specific nouns than the ones that come before them.

(Answers will vary.)

	Person	Place	Thing	Idea
General	famous figure	body of water	toy	fun
More Specific	musician	river	doll	game
Most Specific	Elvis Presley	the Amazon	Barbie	Minecraft

- See more at

<http://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/minilesson/replacing-general-nouns-specific-nouns>