Action toolkit © Pie Corbett, 2024

Always ask, "What mood am I trying to create?" – then you can select words that fit.

TalkforWriting

To generate pace, show how a character acts and reacts, and develop atmosphere, you might want to:

Nursery/Reception	Y1/2: as in N/R+	Y3/4: as in Y1/2+	Y5/6: as in Y3/4+
• Refer to the **Description Toolkit** and select aspects that apply to action, for example, orally describe how something moves	• **Pile up the action** with a sentence of 3 (commas in a list): *He ran down the lane, leapt over the wall and screamed!* • **Hint at the emotion of the character** through the verbs chosen: *dashed, leapt, grab, grip, chase* Limit – *got, came, went, said, looked* • **Add detail to how the character moves** by adding in an adverb: *She tiptoed suspiciously* • **Show your character's reaction** through verb choice: *she smiled; he frowned* • **Interrupt and interject the action** with onomatopoeia: *Snap! Crash!* • **Advance the action** through a range of dramatic openers (fronted adverbials): *Suddenly, ... At that moment, ... Unfortunately, ...*	• **Show how a character is feeling through their actions and reactions** (verbs): *trudged, tiptoed, glanced, sighed, glared* • **Inject action into the setting, creating atmosphere** through personification and simile: *The bushes seemed like they were holding their breath. The trees lined the streets like an army.* • **Drop the reader straight into the action** with an '-ing' progressive opener: *Leaping out from behind the car, ...* • **Extend the action** using a progressive '-ing' clause: *The trees lined the streets like an army, standing to attention.* • **Vary sentence length to affect the reader,** e.g. short punchy sentences to build tension and pace: *The door slammed shut. He was not alone.* • **Advance the action** through a wider range of dramatic openers (fronted adverbials): *In an instant, ... Without warning, ..., Without thinking …*	• **Use a character's reaction or the author's comments to show the effect of a description:** *Joanna shuddered. This was not a happy place.* • **Mirror the character's feelings through the setting** (pathetic fallacy): *The murky water lay dead before him.* • **Push for vocabulary that powerfully intensifies the desired mood and feeling:** *mocking, dominating, pounding* • **Advance the action** through speech that shows emotion: *"Come back, you scoundrel!"* • **Build tension whilst advancing the action** through repetition:. *Towards the lake ... towards the bowl ... towards my fish!* • **Explore the ways different characters react to a situation:** *Jack screamed; Raj laughed.*