

## TeachKind Writing and Speaking Tips



### Avoid Speciesist Language

Language conveys ideas, and the last thing we want is to convey anti-animal ideas to students. The English language is replete with terms for killing, torture, and cruelty and with words that belittle, degrade, or objectify other-than-human animals.

- Avoid euphemisms, which are often disguised as grandiose words or phrases (“negative reinforcement,” “culling the herd”). Say what you really mean (“painful electrical shocks” and “slaughtering buffalos”).
- Beware of “scientific” lingo (“maternal deprivation,” “operant conditioning”).
- Do not define animals according to the way they are used or exploited. Question any adjective placed before the word “animal,” or before the name of any specific animal (“laboratory animal,” “dairy cow”).
- Never refer to an animal with an inanimate pronoun (“it,” “which,” “that”).
- Avoid words that portray animals as dangerous, vicious, or inferior (“wild animal,” “beast,” “lower species”).
- Take note of these examples:

#### Undesirable

animal cruelty  
meat  
biomedical research  
researcher  
subhuman  
laboratory/farm animals  
  
game species  
sacrifice  
process  
laying hen  
it  
that  
thing (as in “living thing”)  
wild  
brutal

#### Preferable

cruelty to animals  
flesh  
experiments, tests  
animal experimenter, vivisector  
nonhuman/other-than-human  
animals used in experiments/  
for food  
animals killed for sport  
kill  
slaughter  
hen  
she or he, s/he  
who  
being  
free roaming  
barbaric

### Note to teachers

Using PETA literature, acquaint students with animal rights issues. Encourage discussion in class, comparing older, widely held beliefs with a more modern understanding of our relationships with our fellow animals. Assign these ideas as essay or research topics or use them as guidelines for class discussions.



beast, creature  
killer whale  
unnatural acts  
pet

owner/master  
eats like a pig/is a chicken/is catty

animal  
orca  
confusing tricks  
companion animal,  
animal companion  
guardian, friend  
is gluttonous/is fearful/  
is spiteful

### **Don't Give Lip-Service to Anti-Animal Arguments or Ideas**

**The public routinely hears the anti-animal arguments, so avoid reinforcing them.**

- Speak affirmatively.

Example: "It's not true that vegetarians are weaklings."

Better: "Vegetarians are healthier and slimmer and live years longer than flesh-eaters."

- Remember, animal exploitation was never acceptable.

Example: "Outdated and cruel animal testing..."

Better: "Cruel animal testing..."

Example: "Dissection may have been acceptable in the 1950s..."

Better: "Today, there's just no need for dissection with so many fabulous replacements."

### **Avoid Redundancy**

**Make your point forcefully once and then move on or you may bore your audience and lessen the impact of your statements.**

Example: "Countless animals are killed every year by children, and their behavior is shrugged off as 'kids just being kids.' There is an obvious need to teach children the value of being kind to all animals when such violence is so prevalent in society."

Better: "Teaching children to respect and protect even the smallest and most maligned among us will help them value one another—and prevent violence."

### **Avoid Passive Voice**

**Use active verbs to enliven your writing or speaking.**

Example: "Research has demonstrated a link between childhood cruelty to animals and violence directed at humans."

Better: "Kids who hurt animals are likely to direct their violence towards humans in the future."

### **Be Brief**

Example: "As you will see clearly on page three of the two-column article from The New York Times by John Spon, which I have attached herewith and highlighted for ease of reading..."



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Better: "(see attached)"

Example: "The point I am making is that dissection is really bad science."

Better: "Dissection is bad science."

### **Avoid Self-Righteous Language and Exaggeration**

**No matter how strong the facts are, students may dismiss arguments if they feel preached to.**

Example: "Only a heartless person could continue to eat animals when everyone knows their innocent lives are snuffed out in screaming agony for the satisfaction of people who can't be bothered to take a moral stand."

Better: "Most compassionate people would stop eating meat if they saw how frightened animals are when they enter the slaughterhouse."

### **Don't Assume Your Audience Knows the Issues**

**Sometimes a perfectly logical statement may sound outrageous to someone unfamiliar with the issues.**

Example: "The misery that calves endure in the veal industry is well documented, as is the suffering of the cows who produce them."

Better: "Calves factory-farmed for veal suffer terribly; they're tethered in small stalls and kept in complete darkness. The mother cow endures an even sadder fate, starting with the loss of her infant a few days after his birth."

### **Be Inclusive**

**Students will feel empowered if your writing or speaking refers to "we," "our," etc. Inclusive language also adds emphasis and credibility to your message and makes it seem less pedantic.**

Example: "You know, dissection is cruel."

Better: "We know that dissection has no place in modern classrooms."

Example: "Lots of schools recognize the value in teaching kids to be kind to animals."

Better: "Most educators really care about animals and are beginning to incorporate simple concepts of kindness and respect into their daily lives."

### **Use Positive Suggestions Rather Than Negative Commands**

Example: "Don't go to the circus."

Better: "Take your family to a non-animal circus."

### **Personalize Your Writing: Anecdotes and Visual Images Are Worth Their Weight in Gold!**

Example: "Leghold traps are atrocities which can trap an animal such as a fox by the face, leg, or stomach."

Better: "Leghold traps? Have you ever seen a yearling fox with his face caught in



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one? I have, which is why I know these atrocities tear into an animal's face, leg, or stomach in minutes."

Example: "Beavers are not the vicious animals many make them out to be. In fact, experienced wildlife rehabilitators often have no problem handling them as needed to mend their wounds and get them ready for re-release."

Better: "Sherri Tippie immediately handles many adult beavers she has humanely live-trapped. Several beavers held in her apartment overnight padded from her bathtub to her living room and curled up next to her cat."

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### **Miscellaneous**

- "Euthanasia" is, by definition, humane, so instead of saying, "humanely euthanized," simply say, "euthanized." If an animal is killed by an inhumane method, say, "inhumanely killed," "killed by an unacceptable method," or "cruelly killed."

