

Show Your Stuff

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The Differently-Abled Writer



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A goal of writers is to show not tell. What does that mean? Here are some examples:

When a writer shows instead of tells the reader fully understands why the writer wrote, “Sam is nice.”

Tell: Sam is nice.

Show: Sam mowed Mrs. Larson’s lawn twice a week, ran errands for the Pritchards and walked Tina’s Pomeranian dogs.

When the writer showed instead of told the reader, the reader can picture and feel Mariah’s sweaty situation.

Tell: Mariah was sweaty.

Show: Sweat trickled between Mariah’s breasts. Her eyes stung when the salty liquid dripped into them.

In the “Tell” sentence the reader is told about Grant’s messy room. A clear picture is painted in the reader’s mind in the “Show” example.

Tell: Grant left his toys everywhere. There wasn’t a clear spot to walk.

Show: Grant littered the room with stuffed animals, puzzle pieces and Legos. Every step Grant took he had to be careful not to step on his toys.

The writer has illustrated Angus’ anger. It’s obvious he’s furious.

Tell: Angus was very furious.

Show: Blood pounded between his ears. A vein pulsed wildly at his temple. Angus clenched his fists and gritted his teeth. “Leave now or else.”

Now it's your turn. Take the following "Tell" sentences and turn them into "Show" sentences.

Tell: Brian got dirty at the creek.

Picture a boy at the creek. Does he fish with worms? Does he fall in the creek?

How does he get dirty? Is he wet and muddy? Is dirt smeared on his face?

Create a word picture for the reader.

Tell: Shorty got in trouble.

Is Shorty, human, cat, dog, iguana...? What did he do? How did he get in trouble? Describe the trouble for the reader.

Tell: Rachelle talked about Camren's ugly shirt.

What did she say? How'd she describe the shirt?

Websites that explore show don't tell

<http://users.wirefire.com/tritt/tip1.html>

<http://www.ilonaland.com/showtell.html>

<http://mrbraiman.home.att.net/page8.html>

<http://www.kristisiegel.com/dialogue.html>

<http://www.writedesignonline.com/assignments/shownottell.html>

[http://www.theinstituteofchildrensliterature.com/G3402/rx/ws01/w
ebindex.shtml#Show,_Dont_Tell_](http://www.theinstituteofchildrensliterature.com/G3402/rx/ws01/w
ebindex.shtml#Show,_Dont_Tell_)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Show,_don%27t_tell