

Elaborate by Showing, Not Telling

Create a picture in the reader's mind by writing sentences that show what happened rather than telling what happened. You can do this by replacing linking verbs with active verbs, and of course, by using more vivid adjectives.

Directions: Examine the following sentence pairs. Note that the second sentence in each pair shows the feeling or event instead of telling it. The second sentences should serve as models for future writing.

- 1a. The little girl looked in the window.
 - b. The little girl pressed so close to the window that her breath fogged the glass.
- 2a. My mother and I walked and looked at the glass window of the chapel.
 - b. My mother and I would take walks to watch the glow of the chapel's stained glass.
- 3a. The sorority sisters decorated the halls.
 - b. The sorority sisters cheerfully decorated the halls with green garlands and streamers of red crepe paper.
- 4a. I climbed the fence.
 - b. I climbed up the wooden fence and got a splinter in the palm of my hand.
- 5a. Dominique gives candy to her customers.
 - b. Dominique graciously presents sweet treats of sugar-dusted wafers and creamy milk chocolate to her customers.
- 6a. The table was decorated for Christmas.
 - b. Bright-red ribbons, dimly-lit candles, and a green cloth decorated the Christmas table.
- 7a. The lights sent signals from village to village.
 - b. Twinkling like cheerful flares, the lights sent signals from village to village.
- 8a. She felt embarrassed when she fell.
 - b. She tripped and fell backward, then stood up with blushing cheeks and shaking hands.
- 9a. I get nervous when I give a speech.
 - b. Whenever I am scheduled to give a speech, I suffer with wet, clammy hands and butterflies in my stomach.
- 10a. Two people are playing hockey.
 - b. Two hockey players take unsuccessful swipes at the puck.

Show! Don't Tell!

Directions: Examine the following passages. Note that the second story “shows” rather “tells.” Passage B should serve as your model for writing your own “showing” passages below and on the next page.

Passage A

My mornings are crazy. I am rushing all the time. Sometimes I miss my bus and arrive late to school.

Passage B

I awaken to the annoying buzz of my alarm clock at 6:30 a.m. I am anything but ready to face the day ahead of me. I drag myself to the bathroom, where I brush my teeth, take a quick shower, and wash and dry my hair. After changing outfits three or four times, I run down the stairs, let my dog out, and inhale my breakfast. I scramble for my books and jacket, then race out the front door. I barely make it to my bus on time. Once in the seat, I heave a sigh of relief because I will not be late to school today.

Directions: Write a passage that “shows” rather than “tells” for each of the sentences below and on the next page.

The mall is crowded in December.

Show! Don't Tell! *(cont.)*

I live on a very busy street.

My birthday party is going to be the best ever.

I have a fun hobby.
