

How do I **'Show'**
and Not Just **'Tell'**
My Ideas?

- You can create a strong writing voice by “**showing**” instead of “**telling**”.
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Show Don't Tell

When you tell someone that a movie is “good” or that the weather was “awful” what have you really told that person?

Not much. If you really want to get your idea across, you have to *show* the details so that your reader experiences what you're describing.

Telling or Showing

It was really hot riding across the desert on the back of Dad's motorcycle, so we went to a movie in Phoenix.

Showing

“Before Dad and I started on our trip through the Southwest, I thought that riding on a motorcycle would cool us off. I was wrong. It was so hot and dry in the desert that we baked. The sun beat down from above, the heat radiated up from the pavement, and the engine temperature surrounded us like an oven on wheels. Our lips were burning, and our eyes got dry. One day we just stopped at a Phoenix movie theater and “chilled” all afternoon.

Key Strategies for Showing

- Next time you realize your writing is telling rather than showing, try one of these strategies.

- **Add sensory details.** Include sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch sensations. That way the reader can “experience” the event.

Telling :

My little brother had trouble with his ice-cream cone.

Showing:

The blast of hot air went to work on my little brother's chocolate-swirl ice-cream cone. Little streams began to drip off the rim. Jimmy licked at the sweet, sticky liquid, but he couldn't keep up, and the chocolate goo ran down his arm. As he tried to lick his arm, the ice cream tumbled out of the cone onto the sidewalk.

- **Explain body language.** Write about facial expressions and the way people stand, gesture, and move.

Telling :

- Aunt Elsa was glad to see me.

Showing:

- **When I walked into the room, Aunt Elsa grinned, jumped out of her chair, and ran over to hug me.**

- **Use dialogue.** Let the people in your writing speak for themselves.

Telling :

- **Latrell was happy about his test.**

Showing:

- **Latrell gave me a high five, shouting, “Getting an A on my science test is the greatest thing I’ve done all year!”**

● **ELABORATE.** Add action words
(specific verbs).

Telling :

● **He went into the elevator and the doors
closed.**

Showing:

● **He wiggled his way into the
crowded elevator only to be
devoured by its doors.**

● **USE DEVICES.** Add metaphor, personification, hyperbole etc.

Telling :

The kids were misbehaving.

● *Showing:*

The shrill screams bounded out the front door and I felt sure that my kids could be heard from Texas. With a monstrous gleam in their eyes, they leaped at each other, claws ready to scrape off another layer of flesh.

- **Let's have a**

- **go at**

- **showing.....**

Show this:

● **The room was a mess.**

Show this:

The food was good.

Show this:

The baby was cute.

Show this:

● The teacher was mad.

Show this:

- He has everything a kid could ask for.

Show this:

I was really scared and so was
my friend.

Show this:

The storm was awesome.