

## **Show, Don't Tell: Making Words Do More**

You've probably heard the phrase "Show, don't tell" tossed around in writing circles—like a secret handshake for storytellers. But what does it actually mean?

At its heart, this golden rule reminds us to paint the picture instead of just delivering the facts. Rather than saying "John was angry," show us his clenched fists, the heat rising in his face, and the sharp snap of his voice. Readers want to experience the emotion—not be told what to feel.

Showing draws your audience into the scene, builds empathy with your characters, and makes your story unforgettable. Sure, telling has its place (we're not monsters), but the magic happens when readers can see the story unfold in their mind's eye.

So next time you write, ask yourself: Am I telling them the weather, or letting them feel the storm?

Writing Exercise: Feel It, Don't Say It

Goal: Practice showing emotion through action, dialogue, and sensory detail—not by naming the emotion.

Step 1: Pick one of these "tells":

He was nervous.


She was furious.

They were in love.

He felt embarrassed.

She was heartbroken.

Step 2: Rewrite it by showing instead of telling.

 Use body language, setting, dialogue, or internal thought.

Example – Instead of:

He was nervous.

Try:

His fingers drummed against the table like they had a mind of their own. Every time the door creaked, he sat up straighter, adjusted his collar, and checked his phone—no new messages. When the waitress asked if he wanted another coffee, he said "Yes" before she finished the question.

Challenge: Keep your rewrite under 100 words. Make the reader feel the emotion without naming it.