

Can you tell the difference between writing that's boring or brilliant? Take our *Seven Steps* quiz and see!

(NOTE: The *Seven Steps* are NOT in order.)

The Hamburger Escape

Step 1: Plan for Success. Which plan is better?

- a) We went to the zoo and a bear got loose and chased Jeremy.
- b) We went to the zoo and a bear escaped and chased Jeremy the naughtiest boy in the school. Our teacher whistled really loudly and threw a hamburger to distract the bear so Jeremy was saved.

Step 2: Sizzling Starts. Which story start grabs your attention?

- a) I woke up that morning and ate breakfast.
- b) The lock on the bear's cage looked old, and the bear looked cross.

Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue. Which is the most powerful dialogue?

- a) 'Stand back,' said Ms Elleson our teacher, but Jeremy didn't listen. Suddenly the bear growled loudly. 'Jeremy!' cried Ms Elleson, 'get away from the bear. NOW!'
- b) Ms Elleson the teacher told us to stand back from the cage as the bear was growling loudly, but Jeremy didn't listen.

Step 3: Tightening Tension. Which scene has more tension?

- a) The bear reared up and growled again. Then it jumped at Jeremy and the door flew open. Jeremy yelled and ran and the bear followed him.
- b) The bear reared up and growled again even more loudly. Jeremy just laughed and pretended to growl too, he was jumping around madly. Suddenly the bear snarled and lunged at him. The rusted lock on the door rattled and then with a crack, it broke completely apart. The cage door flew open and for a second the bear just stood there, confused and angry. Then with a yell,

Jeremy started running – and the bear followed.

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell. Which sentence 'tells' and which 'shows'?

- a) My heart was thudding loudly in my chest and brain.
- b) I was really scared.

Step 6: Ban the Boring Bits. Which would YOU rather read?

- a) Suddenly Ms Elleson put her fingers to her mouth and gave a really loud whistle. The bear skidded to a halt and looked at her. Slowly she bent and put her hamburger on the ground and stepped back.
- b) Suddenly Ms Elleson put her fingers to her mouth and gave a really loud whistle. Matthew and Lance and Pete and I nearly went deaf. The bear skidded to a halt and looked at her. Slowly she bent and put the hamburger she'd just bought from the shop, on the ground and stepped back.

Step 7: Exciting Endings. Which is more interesting?

- a) The rangers caught the bear easily, it was still eating the hamburger. Then we saw a few more animals and caught the bus back to school.
- b) The rangers caught the bear easily, it was still eating the hamburger. 'Jeremy,' said Ms Elleson, 'you owe me a hamburger. Get me one from the shop please.' Jeremy just looked at her in amazement. She wasn't even sweating. 'Now Jeremy,' she said firmly. And for once, Jeremy did exactly what he was told.

So how did you score???
(ANS: 1b, 2b, 4a, 3b, 5a, 6a, 7b)

© Jen McVeity, author and National
Literacy Champion