



Step 5: Show, Don't Tell

Seven Steps Writing Tips

Our job as writers is to create pictures in the brains of our readers. That's what Show, Don't Tell is all about.

For example:

Tell:

My brother is lazy.

Show:

'Your turn to do the dishes, Tank,' said Mum.

'Yeah, later,' he said yawning and turned the TV louder.

'No, now,' said Mum. She stood in the doorway, arms crossed. She knew 'later' in Tank's mind meant somewhere between never and infinity. Once, as punishment, Mum put all the dishes and saucepans Tank had forgotten to wash on top of his bed. He just dumped them on the floor. A week later they were still there, a shoe in the spaghetti sauce, sweaty socks on the plates and a really bad smell wafting out the door.

Ah, now we 'see' it. It takes much longer to write, but our readers are far more convinced.

TOP TIP:

Encourage your children to 'prove' important things in order to really convince the reader. For example, what shows you Jake is a great friend? Answer: He ate the biscuits I made that tasted like wet cement.

Action Activity:

Test how words form pictures in our minds by slowly reading these sentences aloud:

- The red poppies stood tall and cheerful in the glass vase.
- There's a baby elephant sleeping peacefully under the lemon tree in our garden.

