**New and Improved!**
**2021 Version**

# Dr. Schellenberg's Toolbox for Creative Writing

## Techniques: Tricks, Tips, and other Bits to help you create memorable texts

## Contents:



For basics on writing essays or MLA guidelines, Literary terms, and Grammar see the other Workbooks in the Dr. Schellenberg series – freely available at www.MrSClassroom.com.

# Introduction

The famous American author Ernest Hemmingway once described how easy it is to write creatively. He stated: “There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.” And that’s a very creative way of describing the art of writing.

Of course, bleeding on your keyboard is both metaphoric and messy. Surely there must be some tricks to writing, right?

That’s where this Toolbox comes in. Here are a collection of tricks, tips and other bits of wisdom to use as you see fit. None of these are rules, they are simply tools you can use. Like tools, they have specific uses; a hammer is not good at everything, which is why you also need a screwdriver and a level and some wrenches in different sizes. Having the right tool for the right job makes everything easier in the end. That’s where this workbook comes in – here are a lot of tools that may help you write better, more creatively, and without so much bleeding on the page.

## Before we start, just a few reminders:

**Hint 1:** **If it doesn’t work, don’t use it.**
Some tools work in some places, and some tools do not. You don’t need to learn or know every tool. Start by learning a few, and try them out.

**Hint 2:** **Keep tools in the background**; they are not the stars and need no spotlights. Repress the desire to show off your new tools, and keep them in the background of your text. Don’t let your reader see how you write.

**Hint 3:** **Recognize how other authors use these tools, then imitate their sentences.** Shamelessly borrow the ways other authors write. Imitate them though, do not steal or copy what they said.

**Hint 4:** **Pay attention to your environment, senses, and attitude** as you try to write. The music in the background, how you are dressed, where you sit, all affect your text. So too – whether you are hungry, angry, tired, sad …

**Hint 5:** **Write. Just write.** Worry about editing later. Just get words on paper to start. Follow your passions and write about what matters to you.

# Creative Writing Class – Overview

## Adapted from the Association of Writers and Writer's Programs (AWP) Recommendations on the Teaching of Creative Writing to Undergraduates

*AWP has created these ideas to clarify the goals and methods, of teaching creative writing.*

---

**The general goal for a graduate program in creative writing is to nurture the literary artist,** which includes more than sitting under a tree and writing in a journal every day. Literary artists need to be well read and well-rounded; exposed to a diversity of world literature, practiced in the process of critical reading, and patient working through editing and revising their own texts. In this way, students learn about themselves, their craft, and their passions as they find their voice and learn to use that voice more effectively over time. **However, let's be clear that an expert writer must first become an expert reader.** Students will gain a deeper understanding of a diverse set of texts, in order to understand the themes other authors have shared, as well as to learn to imitate the skills these authors have used. In this class students will be guided in:

- ☐ **reading** and critical analysis of diverse texts as models – written, visual, and audio;
- ☐ **learning** the strategies other authors have used in these literary models;
- ☐ **writing** original poems, stories, creative nonfiction, plays, multimedia; and
- ☐ **reviewing** each other's writing in discussions lead by the instructor.

In this way, students will encounter literature "from the outside" as readers and critics, and they will encounter literature "from the inside" as writers of their own texts.

## Why Creative Writing? Seven Goals

- ***An Overview of Literature***. Creative writing classes and workshops introduce students to a wide range of literature, spanning time, space, and a variety of cultural viewpoints.
- ***Expertise in Critical Analysis.*** Students will be shown how to think critically, to look for patterns and themes in a diverse set of texts, in order to create a personal toolbox of skills to use in their own writing.
- ***Intellectual Discipline.*** Students will at times be told to narrow their focus and energies to produce the most effective work while learning in addition to meet deadlines and manage time efficiently. And while imitating other authors will be encouraged as a way to learn new styles and writing skills, plagiarism will not be allowed.

- ***Creativity***. By requiring students to work in various literary forms and genres, creative writing classes require creative problem-solving, experimentation, and inventiveness.
- ***Understanding of Diverse Cultural Values***. The study of literature is the study of our own humanity. Students will come into contact with points of view other than their own, encouraging them to become more effective not only as writers but as members of a global community.
- ***A Strong Command of Grammar***. Creative Writing class requires students to deepen skills they may have first developed in their English classes. Specific emphasis will be placed on the variety of tools students can use to build better sentences.
- ***Persuasive Communication Skills***. Because literature is not mere telling stories or freestyle a rap, creative writing students learn rhetorical tactics for becoming more persuasive in their own writing and in their daily lives.

## General Curriculum

**An introductory course like this exposes students to a variety of models and basic skills** useful in writing non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and drama. FCPS requires that students both learn about each of these genres, and show examples of their own writing in each by the end of the year. In addition this class will focus on

- nurturing each student's gifts as writers, recognizing no two students are the same
- giving students freedom to write in forms of their own choosing, on topics and expressing themes that follow their passions,
- encouraging students to develop and use their own "voice"
- grading students based on each student's efforts and development over time

## Grading

**This is a course in which students will build a Portfolio of creative works.** By the end of the year, students will have written **examples of each of the four main areas of study: Non-Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Fiction. Within these areas, students will have freedom to choose styles, content, and presentation,** though all works will need to also have a typed version (script, lyric sheet, etc.) for review. Along with these choice elements, students will be asked to analyze a text, write a brief autobiography/memoir, and respond to a specific short story.

## Essential Questions

Throughout this course we will analyze texts both from the view of the author and the view of the reader. Creative writing is concerned both with the tools an author uses to express their passions, as well as the power a text can have on the reader. With this dual focus in mind, the essential questions for this course include:

- How does reading other texts help me improve my writing?
- What techniques can be used to shape an author's text?
- How are the author's message and the medium/genre the author uses connected?
- How can performance increase the power of the author's message?
- What are effective ways of both voicing a passion, and having an effect on others?

## Expectations

As with all FCPS classes, there are some additional and specific expectations for students:

**Academic Honesty:** Students are to create original work. Imitation of other authors is encouraged but copying is plagiarism and not acceptable.

**Preparation:** Students are expected to be prepared for class, by bringing with them computers, journal, books, texts, and supplies for use in class, each class. While much of the reading for this class is by student's choice, and take place outside of class, students will be asked to finish texts on a schedule throughout the year.

**Participation:** Students are expected to speak, respond, discuss, and offer one another suggestions and positive feedback. This is at times less of a class and more of a writing community, where students can feel free to share what they are working on and get feedback they can use n revising their work without fear of judgement or rejection.

**Deadlines:** Creativity is hard to do on a schedule. But as every author knows: "Writing is never done, but sometimes it is due." Students will have a lot of flexibility in their writing and Portfolios, but there will still need to be specific deadlines for grading.

## Grading Details

### Classwork

Daily worksheets and practice (20 x 10 per qtr)
Friday Peer Practice Sessions (5 x 10 per qtr)

| Quizzes | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Literary Devices (25) | Literary Journal (40) | Sentences (25) | Poetry Vocab (30) |
| | Sentence Basics (25) | Irony (10) | Literary Devices (25) | Dialogue (20) |

| "Tests" | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Choice Fiction | Choice Non Fiction | Choice Drama | Choice Poetry |
| | Memoir | Analysis Paper | Choice Video / Web | Persuasive |
| | | Choice Midterm | | Choice Final |

| | |
|---|---|
| Choice Fiction – Short Story or Alternative | Minimum of 7 pages |
| Choice Nonfiction | Minimum of 4 pages |
| Choice Drama – Screenplay, 1 Act, or Alternative | Minimum of 5 minutes |
| Choice Video / Web | Minimum of 2-4 minutes |
| Choice Poetry – Poetry, Rap, Lyrics, Spoken Word | 2 pieces, min 10 lines each |
| Memoir (Autobiography or Fiction) | Minimum of 4 pages |
| Analysis Paper – Analysis of book read in 1st Semester | Minimum of 3 pages |
| Persuasive Essay on "Omelas" short story | Minimum of 3 pages |

Choice Midterm and Final are an additional Choice assignment of any type to be finished within the first and second semesters and added to the Portfolio.

**Students are encouraged to try new things, experiment, follow passions and above all: to find their own voice and use it effectively.**

**Students are also expected to work with peers to give and receive feedback in a positive manner, working as a writing community to help each student improve.**

# Texts

## Fiction

Short selections from famous authors as models
(Tolkien, Poe, Thurber, LeGuin, Rowling, Atwood)
20 Choice Fiction Books for students (using an IB selection process)

*Shatter Me*, Tahereh Mafi
*Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe
*The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint-Exupery
*The Great Divorce*, C S Lewis
*Frankenstein*, Mary Shelly
*Harry Potter/Deathly Hallows*, Rowling
*Cloud of Witnesses*, Dorothy Sayers
*Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde
*The Alchemist*, Paulo Coehlo
*Train to Pakistan*, Kushwant Singh
*Wizard of Earthsea*, Ursula K. LeGuin
*The Hobbit*, J R R Tolkien
*Man who Was Thursday*, G K Chesterton
*Death of a Ghost*, Margery Allingham
*Short Stories*, Edgar Allen Poe
*Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde*, Robert L. Stephenson
*Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
*Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston
*Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Douglas Adams
*Miss Peregrine's Home for Children*, Ransom Riggs

## Nonfiction

News Articles and Op Eds from newspapers and journals, TED Talks
Short selections from famous authors as models
(Thurber, Orwell, Chesterton, Solnit, Baldwin, King, Carmichael, Baker, Allen)
Selections from *Paper Bullets*, Jeffrey Jackson

## Drama

"Waiting for Godot" (play), Becket
"No Exit" (play), Sartre
Portions of *The Matrix* (script), Wachowski and "Hamlet" (play) Shakespeare

## Poetry

Collected poems from Anthologies
Selections from *A Hard Day's Write* (Beatles); *1965 A Revolutionary Year*, Jackson

**Creative Writing Class 2021-2022**

**Choice Options / Menu of Alternatives**

# MENU

### Fiction

Short Story
Fan Fiction
Flash Fiction
Novel
Parody / Satire
Science Fiction
Fantasy
Historical
News Article
Monologue

### Nonfiction

Speech / Rant
PSA / Advertising
Web Site / Vlog
"TED Talk"
"How-to" Video
Opinion/Editorial
Sermon
Literary Review
Storyboards
Book / Movie Trailer

### Drama

Music Video
Script
1 Act Play
Screenplay
Adaptation
Comedy Skit
Parody / Satire
TV show episode
Storyboards

### Poetry

Poetry
Rap
Song Lyrics
Spoken Word
Shakespearean
or Greek play
Ad Jingles

# 10 Techniques for Authors
## "Write like a Movie Director"


No doubt you have seen a lot of movies and TV shows over the years. Great! That means you have been learning the tricks of how to write better. Maybe you didn't realize it at the time. After all, most people these days tell me they enjoy watching a good movie to reading a book. There must be something about movies that grabs your attention and works on your imagination. I'm not telling you that's bad. Instead … **I want you to write the way the Director uses a camera to tell the stories you see on the screen.** If you can write like a Director creates a movie, you will write in new and fascinating ways. However, **before you start with these Top 10 Techniques, you should know the 2 Film Tips** guiding every Director. It all starts here:

**Start in the middle:** Instead of spending time explaining your setting, introducing people or plots, or giving background information, start the action or dialogue already in motion. Join the story in progress. You can explain who the characters are and why they are here later.


**Show, don't tell:** Instead of trying to explain what is happening, use imagery, symbolism, and conflicts to show what is happening. In movies you can simply use images and soundtracks, special effects and sound effects. In writing you can do the same thing, so long as you focus first on showing, not telling. Help your Reader see and feel and smell and taste the action. Always.

Okay then. Here are **10 Techniques** to help you write better. You don't need to learn all ten. **You can try one or two. Find ones that work for you.** Some of these techniques work better in one kind of story or genre and others work better in a different setting or story. Experiment. **Remember that as you write, have fun with it!** Your passion and joy will show in your words.

**1**

**<u>Zoom in</u>:** to bring a subject, scene, etc., into closeup while maintaining a clear focus

◆ **Use an Elaborator (Absolute Phrase).** An Elaborator is a phrase with a noun and a participle – so a combo of an Identifier and a Describer. That sounds worse than it is. Using one or more Elaborators allows you to zoom in on what's happening, adding details to the original SVO. Here are some absolutes as examples, and then a couple of sentences showing how they can work to zoom in.

her hair bristling mouth foaming chest panting furiously lips smacking
the snake wiggling paint chipped way beyond repair tires squealing

*Engine smoking, gears grinding, the car went into the parking lot at top speed.* or
*The car went into the parking lot, engine smoking, gears grinding, at top speed.*

◆ **Move down the ladder from General to Specific.** At the top of the ladder are abstract ideas like freedom and happiness. When you climb down to the bottom, the ladder stands on firm ground where you bump into things. To move down the ladder is to move away from big ideas and to talk about concrete things people can see and touch. **Start this process by asking yourself "Can I give an example of what I mean?"** Here's an example of moving down starting with: "What is God like?"

*Outside their bedroom windows, beside the road, stood a giant elm, one of the few surviving in Greenwood. New leaves were curled in the moment after the bud unfolds, their color sallow, a dusting, a veil not yet dense enough to conceal the anatomy of the branches. The branches were sinuous, stately, constant; an inexhaustible comfort to her eyes. Of all things accessible to Ruth's vision, the elm most nearly persuaded her of a cosmic benevolence. If asked to picture God, she would have pictured this tree.*

**Movie Examples:**

**2**

**<u>Throw a spotlight</u>:** to shine a strong light on a particular spot, as on a small area of a stage for making some object, person, or group the center of attention.

◆ **Add an Identifier.** An Identifier is a noun phrase that adds detail to another noun. The trick is that the Identifier needs to be right next to the noun it identifies or else the Reader gets confused. **Identifiers can be stacked, one after another, to add a spotlight on one person or place or thing with layer after layer of added detail.** Here are some examples of Identifiers in sentences.

*Jose's car, a 1936 red Ford roadster with whitewall tires, could not start its engine.*
*The jaguar prowled looking at them, two scared tourists, men who had lost their way.*

In the first sentence "a 1936 red Ford Roadster with whitewall tires" is the Identifier. In the second sentence there are two identifiers – the two Chunks after the word "them."

◆ **Use a Chunk "out of order."** **Adjectives placed out of their usual order, as a chunk, act like Identifiers by adding layers of detail after a specific noun.** Only here, the added details come as adjectives, not nouns. Otherwise, the process is the same.

Usually adjectives are placed in front of the nouns – here "old, dented, rough …"
*The old dented car was shocking. Its rough sounding engine sputtered and coughed.*

Elementary School kids add detail by adding adjectives. Don't do that. Instead use "Out of order adjectives," which become chunks, separated by commas, after the noun:

*The car, old and dented, was shocking.*
*The car's engine, rough and sputtering, coughed loudly.*

**Remember: the whole purpose of a spotlight is to give more details about someone or something in the story.**

**Movie Examples:**

**3**

**<u>Zoom out</u>:** to adjust the lens of a camera so that the image slowly seems to become smaller and farther away. To "Zoom out" is to move back away from concrete details to a higher level of abstract ideas. When you focus in on a topic you look for an example to make the abstract idea more concrete. Here, you are asking the questions, "Why does this matter?" and "What does this mean?"

◆ **Move up the ladder from Specific to General.** JK Rowling, in the first of the Harry Potter stories introduces us to the Mirror or Erised. She begins with details but slowly pulls back from the mirror to leave us with the meaning of the mirror, describing first what Harry sees, and then zooming out to Harry's ache of sadness and joy which describe his sense of being an orphan.

*"Mom?" he whispered. "Dad?" They just looked at him, smiling. And slowly, Harry looked into the faces of the other people in the mirror, and saw other pairs of green eyes like his, other noses like his, even a little old man who looked as though he had Harry's knobbly knees—Harry was looking at his family, for the first time in his life.*

*The Potters smiled and waved at Harry and he stared hungrily back at them, his hands pressed flat against the glass as though he was hoping to fall right through it and reach them. He had a powerful kind of ache inside him, half joy, half terrible sadness.*

**Movie Examples:**

**4**

**<u>Pan the Camera</u>:** forcing the viewer to turn their head in order to take everything in, gradually revealing and incorporating off-screen space into the viewer's focus.

◆ **Add a Describer (Participial Phrase). A Describer allows you to show continuing action in the form of the verb with an "ing" ending.** If you are using the "-ed" version of the verb you can still pan; you are only doing so in the past. Describers can be even more powerful when stacked, one on another on another, so the picture in your text keeps moving in one long motion to reveal your topic.

*Whispering softly to each other, hugging closely against the cold night air, the couple struggled to stay under the blanket during the long sleigh ride home.*

*The rocket started it's short and sadly unsuccessful first flight, spinning and shining in the noonday sun, lifting off majestically from the launch pad, and only slightly tilting, uncomfortably, to one side.*

**Remember that with most all Chunks, these are moveable and can appear in different places within the same sentence, with different effects.** In this second version, the subject and verb are left to the end (a periodic sentence) to add irony or suspense. Of the two, the second sentence is probably better because it leaves the news of the rocket's failure until after the panoramic view slowly watches the action, and then, reveals the flaw of tilting, before revealing that the rocket would crash.

*The rocket, spinning and shining in the noonday sun, lifting off majestically from the launch pad, and only slightly tilting, uncomfortably, to one side, started it's short and sadly unsuccessful first flight.*

## Movie Examples:

**5**

**<u>Go to Slow Motion</u>:** to adjust the lens of a camera so that the image slowly become smaller and farther away.

◆ **Use Layering with Chunks (Cumulative Sentences**). **A Cumulative is an SVO with a lot of other Chunks layered into it, adding new levels of meaning. These longer sentences tend to slow the action down** and put the story almost into a sense of slow motion. Compare this Technique to the next one: the Jump Cut, where things speed up and move quickly using shorter sentences. Here JK Rowling stitches together a number of Cumulative Sentences to let us experience the whole event as it is unfolding in the forbidden Reserve Section of the Library late at night.

*Harry snapped the book shut, but the shriek went on and on, one high, unbroken, earsplitting note. He stumbled backward and knocked over his lamp, which went out at once. Panicking, he heard footsteps coming down the corridor outside -- stuffing the shrieking book back on the shelf, he ran for it. He passed Filch in the doorway; Filch's pale, wild eyes looked straight through him, and Harry slipped under Filch's outstretched arm and streaked off up the corridor, the book's shrieks still ringing in his ears.*

◆ **Use Delay with Chunks (Periodic Sentences**). As we saw above with the example from "Pan the Camera," sometimes it is better to add all the Chunks at the start of the sentence and delay the arrival of the main sentence (SVO) until the last words. **This is not a technique to use often, but it can be very useful when you want to build suspense.** Charles Dickens used Periodic Sentences effectively, drawing the Reader through a long sentence made up of Chunks, until getting to a very short SVO in the final words. Like this classic periodic sentence from *A Tale of Two Cities*:

*And when Jarvis Lorry saw the kindled eyes, the resolute face, the calm strong look and bearing of the man whose life always seemed to him to have been stopped, like a clock, for so many years, and then set going again with an energy which had lain dormant during the cessation of its usefulness, he believed.*

**Movie Examples:**

**6**

**<u>Cuts – Match, Smash, and Jump</u>:** In film, cuts are used to abruptly/quickly move from one scene to another, from one person to another, or from one view of a character to another of the same character a short time later. In writing, a Cut can be a short break from the action or a quick change in the action. Authors can perform this with the addition of a very short paragraph or sentence – sometimes of only a few words. Think of long sentences as taking you on a journey, keeping you moving, showing details as you continue to move forward. Short sentences slam on the brakes. And sometimes you want that break for any of many reasons.

- **Employ strategic fragments or short sentences**, especially after long ones.

*Of course they soon came down after him, hooting and hallooing, and hunting among the trees. But they don't like the sun: it makes their legs wobble and their heads giddy. They could not find Bilbo with the ring on, slipping in and out of the shadow of the trees, running quick and quiet, and keeping out of the sun; so soon they went back grumbling and cursing to guard the door. Bilbo had escaped.*

Here, Tolkien (in *The Hobbit*) uses a very long sentence, panning through the action, showing the action as Bilbo runs away from a cave full of goblins. After sentences of 15 words, 16 words, and the mighty 42-word sentence, Tolkien gives us a short and simple 3-word sentence as contrast. This shows how short sentences gain power by being close to a series of longer ones. On the other hand, O'Flaherty uses what is called "Rat-a-tat" prose in describing a scene (*The Sniper*). The short sentences here come one after the other, with a pattern or beat, like the character's short breaths or quickly beating heart.

*The turret opened. A man's head and shoulders appeared, looking toward the sniper. The sniper raised his rifle and fired. The head fell heavily on the turret wall. The woman darted toward the side street. The sniper fired again. The woman whirled round and fell with a shriek into the gutter.*

**NOTE: Here's another use for those short sentences!** Thomas Wolfe, famous author and wit, once complained: *"If you ever have a preposterous statement to make, say it in five words or less … because we are used to five word sentences being the gospel truth."*

## Movie Examples:

**7**

**Fade to black:** to make an image disappear gradually, especially by becoming darker, until the image is totally gone or out of sight. Movies fade to black in order to bring closure to one scene without jumping too quickly away. This is a gentler way of changing moods or scenes than using a Cut. Writers can effectively use this especially at the end of a chapter. However, any paragraph can fade to black when needed. Here's one way to accomplish this:

◆ **Add in just one more clause (As if, Even so, Just like).** Adding in that one last simile or metaphor or image allows the text to fade slowly away. By adding this last image the text does not have as hard an ending, but engages the reader's imagination and softens the transition into what comes next.

*He was tired, so very tired. But he did not know what to do next. His mind raced with conflicting thoughts, arguments he kept playing out within himself, since he could not yet choose the right path, as if he were a child all alone, and lost in a forest.*

◆ **Slow the action by panning over the distance or zooming out.** Think of the ending of the classic Western movies – where the last shot shows the hero on his horse riding off into the sunset. You can do the same thing as you write, using the techniques we have already seen above for panning and zooming out. Here Tolkien ends the action, and the day, by fading out to the stars overhead.

*In the rock-chamber there would have been room for a hundred, and there was a small chamber further in, more removed from the cold outside … There they laid their burdens; and some threw themselves down at once and slept, but the others sat near the outer door and discussed their plans. In all their talk they came perpetually back to one thing: where was Smaug? They looked West and there was nothing, and East there was nothing, and in the South there was no sign of the dragon, but there was a gathering of very many birds. At that they gazed and wondered; but they were no nearer understanding it, when the first cold stars came out.*

**Movie Examples:**

**8**

**<u>Cue the soundtrack</u>:** add music in the background, or sound effects, to set a tone or to give emotional feeling to a scene. This is easy enough to accomplish with a movie that actually has a soundtrack. When writing, you need to add the soundtrack to your text through words and imagery. Just remember the golden rule of writing: **Show, don't tell!** Think of it this way – think of the difference between a story and a report. "Rosenblatt argued that readers read for two reasons: information and experience … Reports convey information. Stories create experience. Reports transfer knowledge. Stories transport the reader, crossing boundaries of time, space, and imagination. The report points us there. The story takes us there" (Clark, *Writing Tools*). Your job is to help readers truly experience your story.

◆ **Add Imagery (Show vs. Tell)** We think about ideas with our heads, but we experience life with our senses. Make sure to engage at least 2-3 of the reader's senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell). Trying to engage all 5 all the time would be silly, but you can engage readers' senses through your choice of descriptions.

◆ **Create a Mood through use of Tone** The tone of your words can emotionally connect with your readers, changing a text from one experience to a totally different one. For example, Dickens, in *A Tale of Two Cities* describes the weather, but gives us a sense of danger and mystery as well, through the use of tone:

*There was a steaming mist in all the hollows, and it had roamed in its forlornness up the hill, like an evil spirit, seeking rest and finding none. A clammy and intensely cold mist, it made its slow way through the air in ripples that visibly followed and overspread one another, as the waves of an unwholesome sea might do. It was dense enough to shut out everything from the light of the coach-lamps …*

In *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coehlo, we hear about the wonder of human life, of how we are all connected in an eternal whole. The tone here is very different from a bumper-sticker version like: "Life is short; the world is eternal; we're in this together." Instead:

*We are travelers on a cosmic journey, stardust, swirling and dancing in the eddies and whirlpools of infinity. Life is eternal. We have stopped for a moment to encounter each other, to meet, to love, to share. This is a precious moment. It is a little parenthesis in eternity.*

The author can choose any words to express meaning. Here the choice of words like "cosmic journey," and "whirlpools of infinity" or moment, encounter and precious" all add to the effect the author is attempting to create

◆ **Use Dialogue to establish a mood** Along with description, dialogue can change the tone of any text. Are people arguing and yelling, or yelling to be heard over a crowd? Are people whispering so as not to be caught, or whispering lovingly after a tender moment together? How people talk can be as important as what they say too.

**NOTE:** Novelist Elmore Leonard suggests that readers may often skip over parts of a text as they read: *"Thick paragraphs of prose you can see have too many words in them. What the writer is doing, he's writing, perpetrating hoopededoodle, perhaps taking another shot at the weather, or has gone into the character's head, and the reader either knows what the guy is thinking or doesn't care. I'll bet you don't skip dialogue."* (Clark, *Writing Tools)*

**NOTE TOO:** In a report you add quotes, not "as action but as an action stopper, a place in which someone comments on what has happened … they interrupt the progress of the narrative." In writing a story, dialogue "thickens the plot" because the words are "overheard." So, in a story, "dialogue transports us to a place and time where we get to experience the events" as they happen (Clark, *Writing Tools*).

**Example:** from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone,* Rowling wants to set up the dangers of Quidditch by showing how nervous Harry is before his first match. Note the foreshadowing here, as something bad will happen on the field soon. Also note the irony/humor as Seamus piles ketchup on his food (symbolizing the coming bloodshed).

*The next morning dawned very bright and cold. The Great Hall was full of the delicious smell of fried sausages and the cheerful chatter of everyone looking forward to a good Quidditch match.*

*"You've got to eat some breakfast." Ron said, pouring syrup on his waffles.*

*"I don't want anything."*

*"Harry, you've got to eat something," said Zoe, taking a bite from a sausage.*

*"I'm not hungry.*

*"Just a bit of toast," wheedled Hermione.*

*"No, thank you."*

*Harry felt terrible. In an hour's time he'd be walking onto the field.*

*"Harry, you need your strength," said Seamus Finnigan. "Seekers are always the ones who get clobbered by the other team."*

*"Thanks, Seamus," said Harry, watching Seamus pile ketchup on his sausages.*

**Movie Examples:**

**9**

**Change the camera angle:** placing the camera in different positions (low angle, high angle, hand-held, over the shoulder) gives different perspectives to the audience. Clark explains: "Before there was cinema, writers wrote cinematically. Influenced by the visual arts - by portraits and tapestries - authors have long understood how to shift their focus in and out to capture both character and landscape … Simple descriptions of standard camera angles should help you imagine how to use your 'word cameras' for a variety of effects …" (Clark, *Writing Tools*).

◆ **Arial view.** The writer looks down on the world, as if standing atop a skyscraper or viewing the ground from a blimp. **Example:** *"Hundreds and hundreds of black South African voters stood for hours on long, sandy serpentine lines waiting to cast their ballots for the first time."*

◆ **Establishing shot.** The writer stands back to capture the setting in which action takes place, describing the world that the reader is about to enter, sometimes creating a mood for the story. **Example:** *"Within seconds, as dusty clouds rose over the school grounds, their great widths suggesting blasts of terrifying force, bursts of rifle fire began to sound, quickly building to a sustained and rolling roar."*

◆ **Middle distance.** The camera moves closer to the action, close enough to see the key players and their interaction. This is the common distance for most stories written for the newspaper. **Example:** *"Scores of hostages survived, staggering from the school even as intense gunfire sputtered and grenades exploded around them. Many were barely dressed, their faces strained with fear and exhaustion, their bodies bloodied by shrapnel and gunshots."*

◆ **Close-up.** The camera gets in the face of the subject, close enough to detect anger, fear, dread, sorrow, irony, the full range of emotions. **Example:** *"His brow furrowed and the crow's feet deepened as he struggled to understand … The man pulled at the waistband of his beige workpants and scratched his sun-aged face. He starred at her, stalling for time as he tried to understand, but afraid to say he didn't."*

◆ **Extreme Close-up.** This writer focuses on an important detail that would be invisible from a distance: the pinky ring on the mobster's finger, the date circled on the wall calendar, the can of beer atop a police car. **Example:** *"The hand of the cancer-care nurse scooped the dead angel fish out of the office aquarium. Patients at this clinic had enough on their minds. They didn't need another reminder of mortality."*

**10**

**Create a Pattern & Break it:** Our minds like patterns – whether in visual settings (like a mosaic floor, or cubicles in an office building, or rows of people sitting at a bar). In grammar patterns can be built using parallel techniques in grammar, since "when two or more ideas are in parallel they are easier to grasp" (Clark, *Writing Tools*).

◆ **Parallelism.** The repetition of ideas in similar grammatical patterns are more memorable than the same ideas repeated randomly. Parallelism refers to the repetition of a grammatical pattern as well as a series of ideas or themes. For example, here is parallel repetition by Dr. M L King, Jr:

*From the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire, let freedom ring. From the mighty mountains of New York, let freedom ring. From the mighty Alleghenies of Pennsylvania! Let freedom ring from the snow capped Rockies of Colorado! Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California!*

◆ **Use Repetition to create expectation, then change it up.** Once you have created an expectation, change things for your reader as a surprise, and for a greater effect (emphasis) or for a release of tension (humor). Continuing with Dr. King's words, he moves the pattern to the Southern states where civil rights struggles were more difficult, and then changes the pattern to a point where he can look into the future when freedom has come at last. These words follow from the pattern above:

*But not only there; let freedom ring from the Stone Mountain of Georgia! Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain in Tennessee! Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill in Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring. And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we're free at last!"*

**Movie Examples:**

**HINT:** For more on Repetition, see the additional work pages below.

# 15 Literary Tricks
## The Basic Literary Devices

There are a lot od the "tricks of the trade" whether you are talking about magic tricks, plumbing, painting, or writing. These are the simple things writers do to capture the imaginations of their readers. It does not matter whether you are writing Poetry or a Sermn, a Newspaper Article, Analystical Essay for Government Class, or a Short Story, these tricks will come in handy. Not all of them are equally important, but all are worth knowing. And there's more where these came from. You can check out the additional 40 Special Effects – more Literary Devices for you to use.

**1. ALLITERATION** Repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds in words that are close together.

- *"When the two youths turned with the flag they saw that much of the regiment had crumbled away, and the dejected remnant was coming slowly back."*
  –Stephen Crane, *Red Badge of Courage*
- "Elderly Mr. and Mrs. Riddle had been rich, snobbish, and rude, and their grown-up son, Tom, had been, worse." –J K Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

**2. ALLUSION** Reference to someone or something that is known from history, literature, religion, politics, sports, science, or another branch of culture. An indirect reference to something (usually from literature).

- *"When she lost her job, she acted like a Scrooge, and refused to buy anything that wasn't necessary."* Scrooge was an extremely stingy character

- *"Chocolate was her Achilles' heel."* This means that her weakness was her love of chocolate. Achilles is a character in Greek mythology who was invincible. His mother dipped him in magical water when he was a baby, and she held him by the heel. The magic protected him all over, except for his heel.

**3. ANTITHESIS** Anti = Against and Thesis = Idea, so opposite ideas placed near each other in a text. When the ideas are placed right next to one another this may be called **Juxtaposition.**

- *"That's one small step for a man – one giant leap for mankind.* -- Neil Armstrong

- "*The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did."* -- Abraham Lincoln, *The Gettysburg Address*

**4. HYPERBOLE** A figure of speech that uses an incredible exaggeration or overstatement, for effect.

- *"If I've told you once, I've told you a million times…."* -- My Dad

- *"Once a fine-looking manor, and easily the largest and grandest building for miles around …"* -- JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

- *"Boys only want love if it's torture."* -- Taylor Swift, *Blank Space*

**5. IMAGERY** The use of language to evoke a picture or a concrete sensation of a person, a thing, a place, or an experience. Imagery uses images, words that appeal to senses: taste, sight, touch, smell, hearing.

- *"Fifty years before, at daybreak on a fine summer's morning, when the Riddle House had still been well kept and impressive, a maid had entered the drawing room to find all three Riddles dead."* -- JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

- "*In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort."*
  -- JRR Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

- "*I see trees of green, red roses too*
  *I see them bloom, for me and you*
  *And I think to myself, "What a wonderful world."*
  *I see skies of blue, and clouds of white*
  *The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night*
  *And I think to myself, "What a wonderful world."* -- Louis Armstrong

**6. IRONY** When what appears to be true on the surface is not the case.

- Dramatic Irony – When the audience knows something to be true the actors on stage do not know. Romeo does not know Juliet is alive in the tomb.

- Verbal Irony – Sarcasm, saying something opposite to what you mean.

- Situational Irony – An incongruous situation, one that does not make sense

**See additional Worksheet "3 Types of Irony" for more detail and examples**

**7. METAPHOR** A figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things without the use of such specific words like or as.

- *"But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!"* -- Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet"

NOTE: Romeo compares Juliet to the bright, beautiful sun which rises in the east daily.

- *"The story had been picked over so many times, and had been embroidered in so many places, that nobody was quite sure what the truth was anymore."*
-- JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

NOTE: Picked over is a metaphor for looking closely, as when someone picks over their chicken bones to eat every last bit of meat; embroidered refers to the art of adding needlework to cloth in patterns or pictures, and so refers to adding things to what is already there.

**8. SIMILE** A figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things, so – the same as a metaphor, except in a simile, the author uses the words "like" or "as."

- *"He sat <u>as still as a mouse</u>, in the futile hope that whoever it was might go away after a single attempt. But no, the knocking was repeated. The worst thing of all would be to delay. <u>His heart was thumping like a drum</u>, but his face, from long habit, was probably expressionless."* -- Orwell, *1984*

**9. MOTIF** A recurring image, word, phrase, action, idea, object, or situation used throughout a work (or in several works by one author), unifying the work by tying the current situation to previous ones, or new ideas to the theme.

- Kurt Vonnegut uses *"So it goes"* throughout Slaughterhouse-Five to remind the reader of the senselessness of death.

- Every Star Wars movie has someone say, *"I have a bad feeling about this."*

**10. PARALLELISM** The repetition of phrases that have similar grammatical structures.

- *"And forgive us this day our trespasses, as we forgive the trespasses of others."*
  -- The Bible
- *"I have a dream this afternoon that the brotherhood of man will become a reality in this day; with this faith I will go out and carve a tunnel of hope through the mountain of despair, with this faith I will go out with you and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows …"* -- Dr. M L King, Jr., "I Have a Dream"

**11. PERSONIFICATION** A figure of speech in which an object or animal is given human feelings or thoughts.

- *"The wind whistled through the trees."* The wind does not whistle, people do.

- *"The Riddle House stood on a hill overlooking the village, some of its windows boarded, tiles missing from its roof, and ivy spreading unchecked over its face."*
  -- JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

**12. REPETITION** The repeating of a phrase or word for emphasis. There are many kinds of Repetition – whether repeating sounds in words (Alliteration, Assonance, Consonance, Rhyme) or larger themes and ideas (Motifs). Here we are referring to the repetition of a word or image to emphasize that idea.

- *"I have a dream"* gets repeated over and over throughout the famous speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**See additional Worksheet "5 Tips for Repetition" for more detail and examples**

**13. RHETORICAL QUESTION** A question asked for an effect, not requiring an answer.

- *"What kind of an idiot do you think I am?"* -- Mr. S.

- *"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet!"* -- Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet"

**14. SYMBOLISM** When an image or phrase is used to represent something else.

- *"The Hanged Man, the village pub, did a roaring trade that night …"* And this pub is in the town of *"Little Hangleton."* Notice the symbolism of death in both names, as Rowling begins the story of the death of the Riddle family members.

- *"If she gets there she knows, if the stores are all closed, with a word she can get what she came for … And she's buying a stairway to heaven."* This song by Led Zepplin describes how gold cannot buy happiness through these symbols, and the song title.

**15. TRICOLON** The pattern of using three examples or any group of three expressions, in a row, for effect. Studies show that people respond better to three than to four or two.

- *"Once a fine-looking manor, and easily the largest and grandest building for miles around, the Riddle House was now <u>damp, derelict, and unoccupied</u>."*
  -- JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

- *"The maid had run screaming down the hill … '<u>Lying there with their eyes wide open! Cold as ice! Still in their dinner things</u>!'*
  -- JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

- *"<u>And when the night grows dark, when injustice weighs heavy on our hearts, when our best-laid plans seem beyond our reach</u>, let us think of Madiba and the words that brought him comfort within the four walls of his cell …"*
  -- Barak Obama at Nelson Mandela's funeral

# 3 Types of Irony
## Situational, Verbal, Dramatic

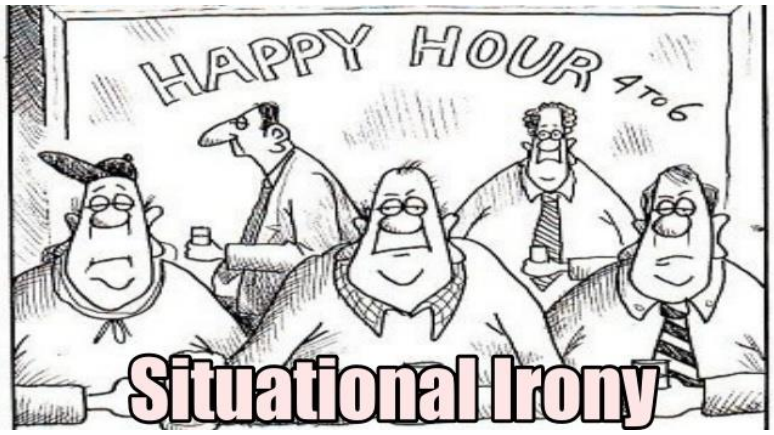
**Irony** is a literary device -- which has been defined as "saying one thing and meaning another." Irony may also occur when a situation is the opposite of what is expected (such as a pickpocket getting pick-pocketed). There are three types of irony:

**Verbal irony occurs when what the speaker says is the opposite of what he meant.** Verbal irony differs from sarcasm in that sarcasm is usually conveyed through a tone of voice. Verbal irony can be understood by an intelligent reader because it depends on using words with different meanings. W.C. Fields once said, "Giving up smoking is easy. I've done it many times." This statement might appear to assert that giving up smoking is easy, but if the smoker has to give it up over and over again, then, the opposite is true. It's not the tone of his voice that makes this funny, but the use of the words.

**"What great weather we're having!"**

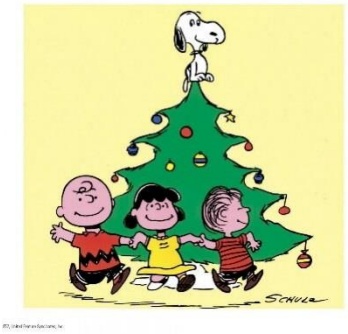

**Dramatic irony occurs when the reader/audience knows something that the characters do not.** When watching a staged production of *Othello*, for example, the audience knows that Desdemona is innocent and that her husband, Othello, is jealous over nothing. In Romeo and Juliet, Romeo wonders at how lovely and pink Juliet's cheeks are for a dead person, but the audience knows she is not dead, only sleeping. So take that Romeo.

**Situational irony** **occurs when a situation is oddly appropriate** (as in the pickpocket getting pick-pocketed). When, in the 1990's, a fire broke out in the Burke Fire Station, it was ironic. A fire station is the last place that one would expect to have a fire. In examples of situational irony, the focus is on the situation more than the words, though someone might be talking.




**It may be "Happy Hour" but no one really looks all that happy.**

---



## Example of Irony from Real Life

Every year since 1965, the "Charlie Brown Christmas Special" plays on TV, now a classic and fan favorite seasonal TV show. In it, Charlie Brown feels upset by the over-comercialization of the season and wonders what Christmas is really all about. The original show comes in just over 25 minutes long. However, as reported recently in the Washington Post, "Peanuts Worldwide, the company that shepherds all things Charlie Brown and Snoopy, confirmed … that the Emmy-winning special was edited down to come in at about 22 minutes — the available running time once you account for ads. That's right: The heartwarming special that sounds a clarion call against the over-commercialization of Christmas had fallen prey to too many commercials at Christmas."

*https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/comic-riffs/post/a-christmas-wish-dont-cut-down-my-charlie-brown-christmas/2011/12/06/gIQAcZ4fcO_blog.html*

# 28 Tricks from Film School
## Because you can learn a lot from movies

You can learn a lot about writing from watching films, and learning from the creative process used to make movies. With both film and print, an author is trying to tell a story and get an audience to keep watching/reading. Some of the tircks for writing of course come to us from long before there were movies. However, many of these tricks are easier to see now that we have movies we can use as examples.The following tricks are taken from a book called: *101 Things I Learned in Film School.* I can also guarrantee the tricks in this book are good and useful, since I am a writer and my daughter graduated from a nationally recognized Film School (UNC School of the Arts – Go Fightiong Pickles!). So Enjoy …


3

### Show, don't tell.

Film is primarily a visual medium; almost everything that needs to be communicated about a story and its characters is better shown than explained. Visual cues, when well conceived, will demonstrate the unseen—inner psychology, hidden histories, and emotional conflicts—far better than direct explication will. And if you show it rather than tell it, you will leave more screen time for more important things.

2

## Start late.

A movie story should start as late as possible and occur over the shortest reasonable span of time. A film that uses too much time setting up the ordinary world of the characters or that spreads over three weeks a story that can be told in three days will feel slack.

In individual scenes, don't waste valuable time on unnecessary entrances and hellos. See if a scene can be started in the middle. A screenwriter or director who is willing to self-edit will often find that a scene is strengthened by cutting the first two, and often last two, lines of dialogue.

10

## Make psychology visual.

**Change of focus:** A character in sharp focus walking into a blurry crowd might be suggestive of an uncertain future. A character walking from a blurred background into a sharp foreground might be getting his values or priorities "in focus."

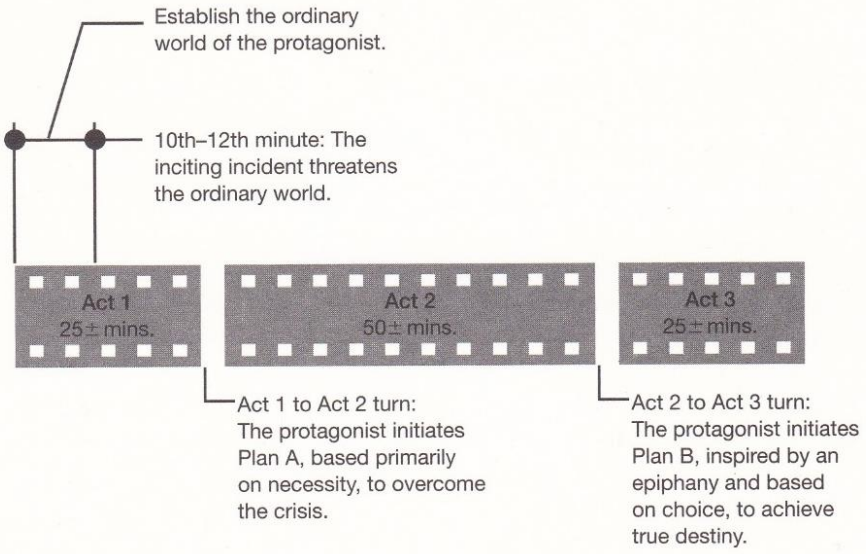
**Low angle camera:** A view looking up at a character will make him or her appear powerful. Also known as a "hero shot."

**High angle camera:** looks down on a character to convey his or her powerlessness or insignificance.

**Tilted (Dutch) angle:** The horizon is skewed or tilted from horizontal, suggesting that something is amiss or off-balance—physically or psychologically.

**Over-the-shoulder:** may suggest a character in a vulnerable, ripe-for-attack position.

**Jitter/hand-held shot:** can project a sense of being overwhelmed while at the center of turmoil, such as a busy emergency room or crime scene.




**Common three-act structure for feature-length American films**

14

# Beginning, middle, end.

Whether working out the broad concept of a new story, figuring out the particulars of a film during production, or editing a story in post-production, efforts should almost always be directed toward establishing and reinforcing a three-act structure.

**Act 1: Establish the problem.** Show the *ordinary world* of the protagonist, introduce the inciting incident that disrupts it, and make the stakes clear and compelling should the protagonist fail.

**Act 2: Complicate the problem.** The conflict grows deeper and broader, and the initial response by the protagonist proves inadequate.

**Act 3: Resolve the problem.** Events reach their inevitable climax and resolution.

13

## The antagonist subverts the truth.

A true "hero" has truth on his or her side. Knowing this, the antagonist usually seeks to subvert the truth. Often, the protagonist and antagonist fear the same truth. In a romantic comedy, where the antagonist—the protagonist's romantic interest—is typically friendly, the truth being subverted is a realization or admission of love.

19

## A high concept movie can be explained in one sentence.

Selling a movie or TV idea is difficult, but it's far easier when you can articulate its premise in a one sentence logline, for example:

- A billionaire weapons inventor dons an indestructible, high-tech suit of armor to fight terrorists. (*Ironman*)
- A woman has twenty minutes to gather 100,000 Deutschmarks or her boyfriend will be killed. (*Run Lola Run*)
- A man ages backward while his beloved ages forward. (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*)
- A curmudgeonly weatherman keeps waking up on the same day. (*Groundhog Day*).

20

## Have a strong *but*.

A clear *but* in a movie's premise is essential to a successful Act 2. For example, "Mamie promises the mob she will deliver a drug shipment from Colombia to Italy, but she's afraid of flying." A premise without a strong *but* will lack sufficient tension, conflict, irony, or humor to carry the middle of the film, while a strong *but* will lead to an Act 2 in which the essential conflict of the film plays out naturally.

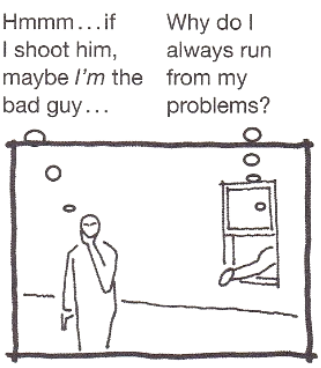
23

## *Story* concerns the specific characters in a film; *theme* concerns the universal human condition.

A theme is a truth about life that is embedded in and emerges from the experience of a film. Themes always relate to the struggles and power of the human spirit: honesty is the best policy; love conquers all; one voice makes a difference; be true to who you are; be careful what you wish for.

A film may have more than one theme; in fact, a film's maker and its viewers may differ on which is the essential one.


Plot




Story

22

## *Plot* is physical events; *story* is emotional events.

Plot is what happens in a movie; story is how the characters feel about what happens. In *The Dark Knight*, the plot sets good guy against bad guy, as Batman seeks to protect Gotham City from the deranged Joker. But the story of *The Dark Knight* is the moral crisis Batman faces in risking his reputation for a greater good.

## Tell a story at different scales.

A full range of shots (called "coverage") conveys a variety of information and emotions, provides visual interest, lends rhythm and pacing, and gives a director more choices during editing.

27

**Wide Shot (WS; also called Master Shot or Establishing Shot):** a broad view that places the action in a physical context the viewer can fully grasp.

**Full Shot (FS; also called Long Shot):** frames a person from head to toe; frequently used for an entrance, exit, or "walk and talk" (following a character).

**Medium Shot (MS):** shows a character from the waist up; primarily used for two or three characters in conversation.

**Medium Close-up (MCU):** shows a character from the shoulders or chest up; used for more intimate conversations.

**Close-up (CU):** shows a character from the neck up; commonly used to capture one side of an intimate conversation or reveal facial detail.

**Extreme Close-up (ECU):** shows a character (or object) in great detail, usually the eyes and nose; can show subtext, irony, dishonesty, or detailed activity such as putting on makeup.

29

## Props reveal character.

A prop is any object physically handled by an actor, including elements of wardrobe. Props not only make a set more lifelike and believable, but inform on character and back-story.

In *Seven*, Morgan Freeman's character has a metronome beside his bed. Its ticking rhythm comforted him and helped him drift off to sleep. But more significantly, the prop conveyed his desire, as an overworked city police detective, to control one noise in a cacophonous city.

## Make setting a *character*.

37

Characters might seem the essential objects of a film, portrayed against a neutral backdrop of setting. But setting can have as strong a presence as character. Every setting has unique attributes—climate, topography, lighting, and so on—that influence or are influenced by its inhabitants. Dialect, clothing, notions of personal space, aesthetic sensibilities, and much more can be part of setting.

Because setting is large, one might be inclined to portray it through broad vistas, such as a savannah, beachfront, cityscape, or desert. But details—a rusty fishing vessel, a wizened fisherman, a loon taking flight, a weather-beaten street sign—are crucial, too.

## Give your characters the anonymity test.

41

Each character's voice should be distinctive and idiosyncratic. When writing or reviewing a script, cover up the characters' names to see if you can tell who is speaking. If the lines are interchangeable, the characters are too similar.

## *Mise-en-scène*

42

French for "what's put into the scene," *mise-en-scène* is the sum of factors affecting the visual aesthetic or feel of a shot, scene, or movie, including the interplay of objects, characters, color, depth, shadow, light, shot selection, composition, production design, set decoration, and even the type of film used.

## Signs of a novice filmmaker

1. On-the-nose dialogue in which characters say exactly what they're thinking or feeling in lieu of subtle exposition
2. Excessive use of coincidence
3. Flashbacks that disrupt forward momentum and take the audience out of the moment
4. Voiceovers explaining exactly what can be seen on screen
5. A perfectly good protagonist or perfectly evil antagonist
6. A passive protagonist who does not choose a course of action
7. Flat frames lacking foreground and background enrichment
8. Too many scenes filmed from the same distance
9. Underactive actors who recite lines without seeming to inhabit the scene
10. Uneven lighting
11. Poor sound quality
12. Inattention to continuity, resulting in simple transition errors
13. An ending that doesn't grow naturally or inevitably out of previous events

52

## Have some showstoppers.

Successful mainstream movies always include several memorable high points, or *set pieces*. These are heightened visual scenes, snippets of which are typically shown in promotional trailers. In a comedy, the set pieces are usually the funniest jokes or squirmiest gags. In action-adventure films, they might show the boldest special effects, chase scenes, or fight sequences. In a horror movie, the set pieces are those that force viewers to cover their eyes.

**59**

## Every movie is a suspense movie.

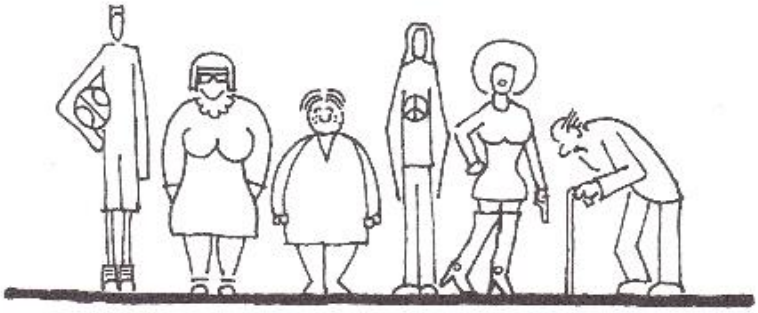
Regardless of genre, a film should continually fuel the viewer's desire to "get to the next page" to see how things turn out. As new information and developments are revealed, the protagonist's dilemma should also deepen. Suspense is the product of the interplay between revelation and deepening dilemma: Will the accumulating discoveries and successes be sufficient for the protagonist to overcome her accumulating difficulties? Will the protagonist ever fully grasp the nature of her struggle? Will she resolve it before it destroys her? Will the next scene be the one in which we find out?

**60**

## Random hypothesis

Suspense doesn't come from speeding things up; it comes from slowing things down.

**61**



## Help the audience keep track of your characters.

**Use distinct names.** Avoid having an Irma and an Alma, or an Elaine and Eileen, unless confusion is intended. Try names with different numbers of syllables, associating adjectives (e.g., "Silent Bob" in Kevin Smith's films), or using a full name for one character (e.g., "Keyser Söze" in *The Usual Suspects*).

**Give characters names that fit perfectly or very imperfectly.** One might expect a "Dirk" to be square jawed or a "Mabel" to be old, but you can play with expectations if it strengthens character and story.

**Give your characters identifying habits.** Pet phrases, verbal tics, unusual clothing, and similar distinctions are helpful, as long as they are not distracting.

**Assume the audience forgets details.** In a script, restate who a character is if not mentioned in a while. If "CRAIG, 28, the office hunk" is introduced on page 3 but not seen again until page 23, remind the reader with "CRAIG, the office hunk, saunters into the bar." Onscreen, have characters reference other characters by name rather than pronoun when it sounds natural to do so.

## Dig deeper.

Good movies are often—or even usually—about simple things explored with depth, nuance, and attention to detail and meaning. Resist the urge to needlessly clutter a film with more and more plot events, hidden agendas, shoot-em-ups, illicit acts, and quirky characters that don't contribute to a central narrative. Instead, dig deeper into the murky gray areas of the events, themes, and emotions already present in the story. Do fewer things, but do them better.

64

## Who is the intersection?

A protagonist typically needs to choose between or reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable situations. A *pivotal character* often provides the crucial connection between the two. It can be a mentor, lover, stranger, marginal relation, or other character who straddles the worlds in conflict. When the protagonist's path intersects with that of the pivotal character, usually in Act 2, the pivotal character provides advice that causes the protagonist to reevaluate his or her understanding of the central dilemma, catalyzing the protagonist's eventual catharsis.

71

## Different lenses tell different stories.

Telephoto and wide angle lenses produce obviously different effects: telephotos (typically 70–1200 mm) narrow the field of view and bring distant things closer, while wide angles (typically 9–28 mm) incorporate a very broad field.

These lenses also have specific effects on movement along the camera's axis of vision. Wide angle lenses tend to exaggerate or accelerate movement to and away from the camera, while a telephoto retards it. For example, an actor moving from the far side of a room toward the camera will appear to move very quickly or abruptly when filmed through a wide angle lens, while an actor moving toward or away from a telephoto lens will appear to be moving more slowly.

73

## Augment action scenes with clean cutaways.

A cutaway is a momentary view away from the main action that provides enriching context or detail. A scene showing a young couple walking on the beach might be complemented with a cutaway of a seagull digging in the sand or an older couple strolling nearby. A scene of a woman engaged in a tense phone conversation might include a cutaway of the sweat on her brow or her chewed fingernails.

A cutaway is "clean" when isolated enough from the general action that it can be inserted during editing without creating continuity problems. For example, an exterior wide shot of two cars careening around a corner can be followed by a clean cutaway of the driver's hand frantically shifting gears, and a return to an exterior view of the vehicles.

Always shoot extra cutaways during filming, particularly for action scenes, to provide more opportunities for improving pacing and dramatic tension during editing.

78

## Burn your characters' bridges.

It's almost always stronger dramatically to prevent your characters from returning comfortably to their ordinary worlds. Limit their options so they remain trapped in the central dilemma, and their only real course is to keep forging into the unknown.

80

"Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away."

—ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

93

## Hang a lantern.

Resolving a complex story in two hours is difficult; the introduction of plot contrivances may at times seem unavoidable. A way out of this problem is to "hang a lantern"—to have an on-screen character question the same logic an audience is likely to question. When a character is willing to acknowledge the improbable, the audience may be more willing to go along with it.

95

## The climax is the *truth*.

A climax is more than the point of highest action or plot revelation; it is the moment at which the protagonist recognizes his or her existential core. The protagonist's false self, previously supported by secrets, lies, shame, or fear, may be stripped away so that a truer, more fulfilled self may emerge.

A hero accepts and evolves in the face of the truth, except in a tragedy, where the protagonist's inability to evolve leads to a tragic outcome.

**98**

## After the climax, get out fast.

After the plot reaches its climax, there are few places for a film to go that won't feel superfluous. Resolve the plot and primary subplots satisfyingly, but don't feel obligated to tie up every loose end. Leave the audience wanting more. Often, a *suggestion* of how the characters end up is more powerful than showing exactly how they *do* end up. Nonetheless, when creating an ambiguous ending, have a clear point-of-view with which the viewer may agree or disagree.

**99**

# 40 Special FX for Authors
## How to create memorable scenes


Movies move at a fast pace these days, making those old black and whote dramas from the classic years of Holywood seem slow and dull. Or watch an old movie that attempts to show monsters or space travel, and the visual effects leave you laughing. Today's movies depend on CG (Computer Generated) shots andall kinds of Special Effects (FX) to capture the audience's imagination. And guess what? There are plenty of Special Effects that authors can use too. Only be careful. Use too many of these and the reader will notice. Use the same trick too many times and the reader will see through your trick. Then the reader will stop readin your text and start simply looking for your next Special Effect. However, used only as needed, these effects can have an impact leaving the reader with a memorable scene.

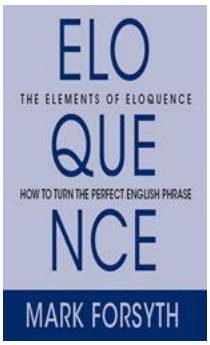
These Special Effects have been used and handed down for thousands of years. So why use them? What makes them special? Many authors no longer use these subtle and sophisticated tricks, relying on more in-your-face tactics to grab attention. But you do not need explosions and sex and swearing and nudity to grab a reader's attention. Instead, try one or two of these.

**HINT 1:** Read over the list and become a little familiar with some of these. Then, look for them as you read other texts. See if you can recognize them in use by other famous authors.

**HINT 2:** Find one or two that you like and write them out on a card or a Post-it Note. Keep it handy to use when you write … and want something a bit extra.

**HINT 3:** Do not use a bunch of these together, or repeat the same trick too often. Less is more when it comes to Special Effects in writing.

---




The following descriptions and examples have been adapted from a book called "Elements of Eloquence" by Mark Forsyth, who states: *"There is more to life than the figures of rhetoric; I just don't think there is much more."* Some of the examples will be familiar to you from our study of Literary Devices. Others may be brand new – though when you think about it, you may recognize that you have heard them before. Authors have been pulling these tricks on you for a long time, and you may have never noticed. Now the time is for you to tricky.

**1. Adynaton** (ad-in-**art**-on) **–** An impossibility.

*"When pigs fly."*
*"Hell will freeze over."*

**2. Alliteration** (*uh*-lit-*uh*-**rey**-sh*uh* n) **–** It is surprisingly simple to add alliteration, and people are suckers for it.

*"Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail."* -- Dickens

**3. Anadiplosis** *(an-uh-di-**ploh**-sis)* **–** The repetition of the last word of a sentence at the start of the next sentence.

*"Suffering breeds character, character breed faith; in the end faith does not disappoint."* -- Paul, *The Bible*
*"For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime."* -- Milton

**4. Anaphora** (*uh*-**naf**-er-*uh*) **–** Starting each sentence with the same words or phrase.

*"We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be,*
*We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds,*
*We shall fight in the fields and in the street, we shall fight in the hills,*
*We shall never surrender."* -- W Churchill

**5. Antithesis** (an-**tith**-*uh*-sis) **–** First you mention one thing, then another. It's not that hard, but rather simple …

*"You're hot and then you're cold. You're yes and then you're no.*
*You're in and then you're out. You're up and then you're down."* -- Katy Perry

**6. Aposiopesis** (ap-*uh*-sahy-*uh*-**pee**-sis) **–** "Becoming silent," this device is signaled in English by three periods …

*"No, you unnatural hags, I will have such revenges on you both,*
*That all the world shall … I will do such things …*
*What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be the terrors of the earth."*
-- Shakespeare, "King Lear"

**7. Assonance** (**as**-*uh*-n*uh* ns) – the repetition of an internal vowel sound.

*"A stitch in time saves nine."* -- Proverb

**8. The Blazon** (**bley**-z*uh* n) – A listing of body parts with similes attached, usually in verse, and often very odd.

*"Hark you that list to hear what saint I serve:*
*Her yellow locks exceed the beaten gold;*
*Her sparkling eyes in heaven a place deserve …"* -- Thomas Watson (1582)

**9. Catachresis** (kat-*uh*-**kree**-sis) – A sentence which is so startling wrong, it is right, like this:

*"I will speak daggers to her …"* -- Shakespeare, Hamlet about his mother
However, no one can actually speak daggers …
*"Curiouser and curiouser!* -- Lewis Carrol, *Alice in Wonderland*

**10. Chiasmus** (kahy-**az**-m*uh* s) – It's all about symmetry, whether in a phrase or a paragraph or in a longer text, where the beginning and the end are connected.

*"Tea for two, and two for tea. Me for you, and you for me."* -- in *No No Nanette*
*"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."* -- President J F Kennedy

**11. Congeries** (**kon**-j*uh*-reez) – A list. That's about it.

*"The expense of spirit in a waste of shame*
*Is lust in action: and till action, lust*
*Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,*
*Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust …"* -- Shakespeare

**12. Diacope** (die-**ack**-oh-pee) – A verbal sandwich, in which a word or phrase is repeated after a brief interruption.

*"Fly, my pretties, fly."* -- Wicked Witch of the West, in *The Wizard of Oz*
*"Bond. James Bond."* -- Guess who …
*"Alone, alone, all all alone."* -- Coleridge, "The Ancient Mariner"

**13. Enallage** (e-**nall**-aj-ee) – A deliberate grammatical mistake.

*"We was robbed."* -- Joe Jacobs, manager to Max Schmeling
*"Mr. Kurtz – he dead."* -- J Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
*"Do not go gentle into that good night"* -- Dylan Thomas

**14. Epanalepsis** (ep-*uh*-n*uh*-**lep**-sis) – A phrase that begins and ends with the same word.

*"The king is dead, long live the king."*
*"Man's inhumanity to man."* -- Robert Burns

**15. Epistrophe/Epiphora** (ih-**pis**-tr*uh*-fee) – When a clause, sentence, paragraph or stanza ends with the same word.

*"Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. If Casy knowed, why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an' — I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build — why, I'll be there."*
-- Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*

**16. Epithets** (**ep**-*uh*-thet) – *Transferred Epithets occur when an adjective that is supposed to be applied to one noun is applied to another instead.*

*"The nervous man smoked a cigarette"*
*becomes "The man smoked a nervous cigarette."*
*"The ploughman homeward plods his weary way."* -- Wilfred Owen

**17. Epizeuxis** (ep-ee-**zoox**-is) – A figure of speech in which you repeat a word immediately in the same sense. It can be done with a single repetition, but is more forceful when following the rule of three.

*"The first rule of Fight Club is: you do not talk about Fight Club. The second rule of Fight Club is: you do not talk about Fight Club."* -- in *Fight Club*
*"Ask me my three main priorities for government and I tell you: education, education, education."* -- Tony Blair
*"I'm shocked, shocked to find gambling is going on here."* -- *Casablanca*

**18. Hendiadys (**hen-**dahy**-*uh*-dis**) –** Substitution of an adjective and adjective for a phrase originally having an adjective and a noun.

*"I love your beautiful eyes"* becomes *"I love your beauty and eyes."*
*"For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory"* may actually refer to a *"glorious and powerful kingdom."* Or not. You never know with hendiadys what the author really meant because it remains hidden.

**19. Hyperbaton (**hahy-**pur**-b*uh*-ton**) –** Placing words in an odd order, something which is very hard to do in English where word order is everything (Unless like Yoda you are speaking)

Adjectives: (opinion-size-age-shape-color-origin-material-purpose-noun)
Ablaut reduplication: repeating words with different vowels: I A O
Alternating stress patterns: indicate whether related words are nouns with first syllable stressed or verbs with second syllable stressed … (see: convict/insult/subject)
*"Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage …"* -- R. Lovelace

**20. Hyperbole (**hahy-**pur**-b*uh*-lee**) –** Exaggeration. Overstatement.

*"I was so hungry I could have eaten a horse."*

**21. Hypotaxis (**hahy-p*uh*-**tak**-sis**) –** A sentence within a sentence, within … A sentence with many clauses (and causes). Also known as a Cumulative Sentence when studying grammar.

**22. Isocolon (ahy**-s*uh*-koh-l*uh* n**) –** Two clauses which are grammatically parallel and structurally the same.

*"Float like a butterfly; sting like a bee."* -- Cassius Clay/Mohammed Ali
*"Where I'm going, you can't follow. What I've got to do, you can't be any part of."* -- from *Casablanca*

**23. Litotes (lahy**-t*uh*-teez**) –** *An affirmation of something by denying its opposite.* Understatement.

*"Ireland is no ordinary country."* actually means "it's special"
*"Geoffrey, this isn't rocket science."* actually means "it's easy"
*"The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."* means "they're similar"

**24. Merism –** It looks like antithesis, but it's where you name all the parts of what you don't name.

*"I take you to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, til death do us part."* Or: "Always, in any situation." -- *BCP 1979*
*"Ladies and Gentlemen …"* Or: "People!"

**25. Metonymy (**mi-**ton**-*uh*-mee**) –** *Two things are connected to each other because they are physically connected.*

**26. Synecdoche (**si-**nek**-d*uh*-kee**) –** *An extreme form of metonymy in which a body part steps in to represent the whole …*

*"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships …?"* -- Dr. Faustus
*"The pen is mightier than the sword."* -- E B Lytton

This second saying has two Metonyms: "Pen" stands for "the written word, and "Sword" stands for "military aggression." The next examples show synecdoche:

*"The farmer needed to bring on some hired hands."* Hired hands = workers
*"What's the headcount for next week's party?"* Head = whole person
*"I'm looking forward to breaking bread with you."* Bread = whole meal
*"Let's take my new wheels out for a spin."* Wheels = the whole car

**27. Paradox –** Hard to define but easy to see, a paradox is a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement that when investigated or explained may prove to be true.

*"The sound of silence."* -- Paul Simon
*"The first shall be last and the last shall be first."* -- Jesus, *The Bible*
*"Youth is wasted on the young."* -- Oscar Wilde

**28. Parataxis (**par-*uh*-**tak**-sis**) –** A sentence with a normal word order of Subject-Verb-Object -- because English is uninflected and linear.

**29. Periodic Sentences –** A long sentence that is not complete until the end.

*"Every breath you take, every move you make*
*Every bond you break, every step you take, I'll be watching you."* -- Sting

**30. Personification –** The attribution of human characteristics or actions to animals, inanimate objects or abstract ideas.

*"O beware, my lord, of jealousy; It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on"* -- Shakespeare, in "Othello"

**31. Pleonasm (plee**-*uh*-naz-*uh* m**) –** *Using extra words where they are not needed.*

*"To be or not to be, that is the question."* -- Shakespeare, in "Hamlet"
*"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God to join together this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony …"* -- *BCP*, Marriage Service

**32. Polyptoton –** The repeated use of one word in different parts of speech or forms.

*"Give us this day our daily bread."* -- Jesus, *The Bible*
*"I have been a stranger in a strange land."* -- Moses' wife, *The Bible*

**33. Polysyndeton (**pol-ee-**sin**-di-ton**) –** Using lots of conjunctions in a sentence
**34. Asyndeton –** Not using a lot of conjunctions in a sentence

*"And Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, 'Take, eat, this is my body.' "* -- Mark (polysyndeton); Jesus (asyndeton)

**35. Prolepsis (**proh-**lep**-sis**) –** Using a pronoun in a sentence or paragraph before the noun which should be its antecedent (to which the pronoun refers).

*"Nobody heard him, the dead man, but still he lay moaning."* -- S. Smith
*"There were three of them. He'd known that all along. But why had she sent them? He thought of telling them he didn't have it anymore …"*

**36. Rhetorical Questions –** A question for which an answer is not expected. Well, actually there are 16 different kinds of unanswerable questions, according to the Greeks, who also named each of them with totally forgettable names. I mean do you really want to know them?

*"So what kind of an idiot do you think I am, anyway?"*
*"Does anybody really know what time it is?"* -- Chicago (band/rock lyrics)

**37. Scesis Onomaton** (**skee**-sis o-**no**-mat-on**) –** A sentence lacking a main verb. A fragment, written on purpose. Like that. Just like that in fact.

*"Space. The final frontier."* -- *Star Trek* introduction
*"London. Michaelmas term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall."* -- Dickens, *Bleak House*

**38. Syllepsis** (si-**lep**-sis**) –** Phrase using one word in two incongruous ways, on purpose.

*"The trouble with Ian is that he gets off on women because he can't get on with them."* -- famous quote about Ian Flemming
*"Mr. Pickwick took his hat and his leave."* -- Charles Dickens
*"He fell into a barrow and fast asleep."* -- Charles Dickens

**39. Synaesthesia** (sin-is-**thee**-zh*uh*) **–** A description in which one sense is described in terms of another sense.

*"She sounded the way the Taj Mahal looks by moonlight."* -- Raymond Chandler

**40. Tricolon –** In place of a duality (two items) you can establish a pattern and break it with three. Or you can count on three as the magic Rhetorical device known as "The Rule of Three," since the pattern of three items has been found to be more memorable than two or four.

*"Wine, women, and song"* *"Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"*
*"The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly."* *"Truth, justice and the American way."*
*"It's a bird. It's a plane, No, it's Superman."* *"… every Tom, Dick, and Harry."*

Winston Churchill once tried a tetracolon with his famous: *"blood, toil, tears and sweat"* However, this was unmemorable and changed to the simpler, *"Blood, sweat and tears."*

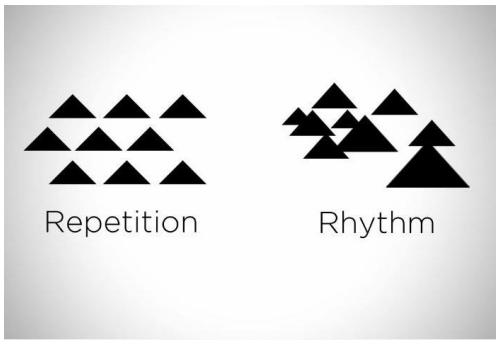
**41. Zeugma** (**zoog**-m*uh*) **–** When clauses all use the same verb, but the verb is left out of the subsequent clauses and kept only in the first. Not a useful thing in English, but still used …

*"For contemplation he and valour formed,*
*For softness she and sweet attractive grace;*
*He for God only, she for God in him."* -- Milton, *Paradise Lost*
*"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?"* -- *The Bible*

# 5 Ways to Repeat Yourself (Again)

## Creating Patterns with your Words

Back in Elementary School, your teacher told you not to repeat yourself when you write. That was fine for back then, but, let me say it again, that was good for back then. Not now. Using Repetition in your writing opens the door for adding emphasis, meter, themes, parallelism, and rhyme. Great writers, and especially great speakers, use repetition to great effect, making words easier to understand and often, hard to forget. Repetition was mentioned in the Top 10 Techniques worksheet but here we repeat it to go into more detail.




**1. <u>Emphatic</u>:** The most common reason people add repetition is for the immediate effect. They want to emphasize a word or idea and so that word or idea simply gets repeated. One word may be repeated, or synonyms may be added for emphasis, such as:

> *"Rodney, get your dirty stinking feet off the table."*
> *"Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creep in this petty pace from day to day …"*

In the first example, dirty and stinking are synonyms, meaning roughly the same thing, and repeat the same idea to make sure Rodney gets the idea that you really want him to get his feet off the table. In the second example, from Shakespeare's Macbeth, the author repeats the same word over and over (like that – over and over) to emphasize how days keep on moving.

Or just think of the classic video clip from the movie *Cop Out* with Tracey Morgan sitting next to Bruce Willis in a car saying,

> *"No, no, uh-uh, mm-mm, no, no. No-no-no. No. Hell no. No, no. I refuse, no … no."*

**2. <u>Grammatic</u>:** When grammar is repeated two parts of a sentence end up looking and sounding the same. This is known as parallelism. Think of two parallel lines in Math class. They are next to each other, going in the same direction, looking the same. Parallelism in writing is a very common technique, especially in speeches. Why? People tend to remember parallel lines. Indeed, some of the most famous lines you may remember were written with parallelism.

*"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."* The Bible

*"That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."* Neil Armstrong

*"Science investigates; religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge, which is power; religion gives man wisdom, which is control …"* Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Once you learn to recognize parallelism, you will begin to see it everywhere. That's because this form of repetition makes a large impact on readers, and can help readers remember your main point better. So, once you understand parallelism, you can start to see examples in other places; the final step is to start using it effectively in your own writing.

**3. <u>Thematic</u>:** Every author leaves clues to the deeper meaning of the text throughout that text. Those clues often appear as Literary Devices. Remember there are many, many literary devices, but they are not all equal in quality when it comes to using them as clues to the author's theme. Among the most important are motifs. **A motif is a repeated image, phrase, or idea in a text. Repeating a motif in a text is a good clue to the text's overall Theme.**

Some motifs are merely for fun – the way that every *Star Wars* movie has someone say, "I have a bad feeling about this," or how every Marvel movie has a cameo by author Stan Lee in it. Other times, the motifs that can be found throughout a text give clues to a larger meaning.

For example, in "Macbeth" unnatural events from storms to odd-acting animals show us that evil itself is against nature. Or in "Hamlet," the author uses a repeated motif of rot and decay, and an unweeded garden, as an image of evil. Or more famous of all, Hamlet is so often seen holding a skull, a motif of death in the play as Hamlet questions the meaning of life.

Repeating a phrase or an image makes that image into a motif. Use motifs throughout your writing to offer readers a chance to understand your deeper message.

**4. <u>Rhythmic</u>:** Words have a sound to them, something we see very clearly in poetry. However, in prose – that is, in writing that is not poetic – words can be brought together in order to create pleasing rhythms. Again, this becomes more noticeable in speeches, but can also be effective in written word. Rhythm can be seen at the level of syllables (parts of words) or the level of individual words, or in the pattern of sentences in variety and length.

Notice the rhythmic difference between these two texts:

*She went to the shop. She bought ingredients. She prepared Beef Rendang. She let it simmer for 5 hours. The house filled with exotic smells. She cooked rice. She waited for her husband. They ate a delicious dinner. She thought life was good.*

*She went to the shop to buy ingredients. And when she prepared the Beef Rendang in the afternoon, exotic smells wafted through the house. After dinner, she whispered to her husband: "Life is good."*

One trick is to use long panoramic sentences to describe actions taking place over a period of time. Short, quick sentences next to one another can describe fast actions, one coming after the other. Notice how these techniques are used in this example from "The Sniper":

*His enemy had been hit. He was reeling over the parapet in his death agony. He struggled to keep his feet, but he was slowly falling forward as if in a dream. The rifle fell from his grasp, hit the parapet, fell over, bounded off the pole of a barber's shop beneath and then clattered on the pavement.*


Notice how the sentences get longer and more detailed, describing the action as it slowly unfolds, as the man struggles, falls, dropping his rifle, and then down to the sidewalk. It's all as if the action is seen in slow motion. That's very different than the "Rat-a-tat" action (as it is called) from another part of the story. Here the sentences are fast and short. They have a beat to them, almost like the fast heartbeat of the person in the story:

> *The turret opened. A man's head and shoulders appeared, looking toward the sniper. The sniper raised his rifle and fired. The head fell heavily on the turret wall. The woman darted toward the side street. The sniper fired again. The woman whirled round and fell with a shriek into the gutter.*

**5. <u>Audible</u>:** Here the repetition in your writing is something others can hear. Audible means something that you notice with your ears. And even though we are focused on writing, the words all have sounds, sounds which the author can play with to create an effect. Poets use can use Rhyme to match the final sounds of words. But there are other ways to use audible repetition.

For instance:

**Rhyme** *"I will not eat them on a log, I will not eat them with a frog."*
Word endings sound the same or similar

**Alliteration** *"Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers."*
Words begin with the same or similar sound

**Assonance** *"He finds it fun to flick the sticks of lighted matches at you."*
Words contain similar vowel sounds (here the short "i")

**Consonance** *"He liked to collect the odds and ends of his dad's hobbies."*
Words contain similar consonant sounds (here the "ds")

**Diction** *"A government of the people, by the people and for the people …"*
Phrases somehow end up have a pleasing sound to them

---

## A FINAL HINT:

*"The pattern for authors is repetition, repetition, repetition, flavored by variation … Repetition can be so powerful in fact, that it can threaten to call attention to itself, overshadowing the message of the story. If you're worried about too much repetition, apply this little test: Delete all the repetition and read the passage aloud without it. Repeat the key element once. Repeat it again. Your voice and ear will let you know when you've gone too far."*

-- Roy Peter Clark, *Writing Tools*

# 5 More Tips for Authors

## "Write like playing a Video Game"

If you have played many video games over the years, you know some basic things about learning a new game. First, you are not going to win the first time you play. If you did, the game would not be much of a challenge. So, you will have to play the game over and over, and your character may die many times. You may need to gain experience and level up. You may need to learn how to use combo moves, and you may be tempted to grab some cheat codes to make it easier to beat that final boss. If any of this sounds familiar, then you are also familiar with some of the basic steps in writing. Here goes:


**1. <u>Die many times</u>:** In order to learn how to beat the boss and win the game you may end up dying many, many times. You try something, and it doesn't work, and you figure that out and you keep playing. In writing, you will write a lot of stuff – a lot of bad stuff. That's OK. **Just keep writing, and with practice you'll find you write better things.**

**2. <u>Level up</u>:** The more you play, the stronger your character becomes. You gain experience points which makes it easier to live longer and score higher. So too, with writing, the progress may be slow, but **you will begin to see that your writing is getting stronger the more you do it <u>and review it</u>.**

**3. <u>Practice Combos</u>:** Every character has a special move or two that you can practice and use, not all the time, but sometimes, when you really need it. **When writing it is good to have a couple of signature combo moves you can use to show your style** (for more see: Techniques / Tips). And how do you develop these? That's where Cheat Codes come in very handy!

**4. <u>Use Cheat Codes</u>:** Gamers know they can find Cheat Codes online or in the Player's Guide to their favorite game. Writer's find these hints in the texts they read. One of the great benefits to reading a lot of other people's work is to find the neat ways they have of expressing themselves. **Look for cool sentences as you read and then learn to imitate them.**

**5. <u>Team up</u>:** It's usually easier to beat the Boss and win the game when you team up with another player. In writing "Teaming up" happens when you share what you have written with others. **Listen to the feedback of other writers who can help you see things you missed.**

# 5 The 5 Chunks

## Bundles of Creativity

**Chunks are those neat extra bits of detail or action that can fit into a sentence -- at the start or the end, or even in the middle of the SVO.** And to make things more fun, you can stack Chunks up next to each other, or one after another. There are about a handful of different kinds of Chunks so they are not hard to learn. In fact, you've been using Chunks for years as you talk. Imagine! You already know how to use them (except for their punctuation) just from talking to people every day.

Let's start with our classic SVO, the five-word sentence: *I went to the store.*

Now, since five-word sentences get really boring after a while, you will want to know how to add more detail to them. Here's where Chunks come in.

**SVO.** **I went to the store.**

Next add a chunk and a comma: **I went to the store, before Mom came home.**
Or add that chunk at the start: **Before Mom came home, I went to the store.**
Or even add it in the middle: **I went, before Mom came home, to the store.**
Or add two chunks: **Before Mom came home, I went to the store to get milk.**
Or if you want to go wild you try:

Before the sun went down, hiding its face from sight, I went, quickly and quietly, tiptoing in fact, without my shoes on, to the store, the 7-11 over by Bailey's Crossroad.

**Remember: Commas are an important thing to add whether you are putting a Chunk at the start or the end, or in the middle of your sentence**. Just be sure you are not adding a comma and trying to glue two SVO's together, because that's a Comma Splice and that's wrong.

### 5 Chunks to know and love

| | | Example Chunk |
|---|---|---|
| **Connectors** | start with a Preposition | "with a banana" |
| **Describers** | start with a Participle | "running for his life" |
| **Identifiers** | start with an Article | "the green one" |
| **Elaborators** | combines Describer and Identifier | "the engine running fast" |
| **Relatives** | start with "who" or "which" | "which broke in half" |

**HINT: Chunks are known by the first word in them.**

# Using the 5 Tools to Fix Those 5-Word Sentences

**Chunks are tools, the phrases and clauses that you add to make your sentences better.** It's not that longer sentences are always best, but they are better than lots of five-word sentences. So how do you add them? And where? Let's go back and a Chunk or two to our standard five-word sentence. Yes, let's start with the basic sentence structure: S V O.

S V O
*I went to the store.*

**To this you can add chunks before the sentence: *, S V O.**

*Suddenly and for no reason, I went to the store.*

**You can add chunks at the end of the sentence: S V O, *.**

*I went to the store, bumping into my brother along the way.*

**And if you're tricky, you can add chunks in the middle: S V, *, O.**

*I went, quickly and quietly, to the store.*

**Less useful, but still possible sometimes* -- you can interrupt the Subject and Verb like this:**

*I, quickly and quietly, went to the store.*

***You can even do some combination of all three: *, S V, *, O, *.***

*Suddenly and for no reason, I went, quickly and quietly,*
*to the store, bumping into my brother along the way.*

**HINT: The nice thing about chunks is they are movable,** and you can put two of them together or move them all around in your sentences, fitting them neatly into these three slots anyway you choose: (1) at the start, (2) at the end, and (3) between the verb and the object.

*Suddenly and for no reason, quickly and quietly, I went to the store.*

*I went to the store, quickly and quietly, suddenly and for no reason,*
*bumping into my brother on the way.*

---

* Adverbs can go anywhere in a sentence, Identifiers must come after the noun or pronoun. But note: other Chunks are not commonly placed between the Subject and the Verb.

# The 5 Tools – Most Common Chunks

*Adapted from the works of Don Killgallon*

**1. Connector** (Prepositional Phrase)**:** When a preposition appears at the start of a phrase it helps to add more detail to a sentence. These phrases are not required and can be removed, which means you don't usually need to add a comma before you throw one or more of these into your sentences. Why use them? They are so good at so many things, such as:

Causation: Because of, due to
Direction: From, out, above, under, beside
Connection: Including, about, according to, against
Transition: since (time), around, from
Duration: during, after, at, since

> *Above the trees and rooftops, the dingy glare of the London sky faded upwards into weak violet heights.* – A. Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*

> *He sat by the windows, hunched down in a rocking chair, scowling, waiting.* – Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

> *In an armchair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see.* – Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

**2. Describer** (Participial Phrase): Verbs can be used to describe a noun. This as one of the easiest ways to add movement, detail, and imagery. All you do is start with a participle: either the present *"--ing"* form of a verb, or the past form (most often the *"—ed"* form). These participles also work well when you add more than one of them in a row, separating them by commas, keeping the action going, moving things right along. Like that. Or, like this:

> *The stone struck the spider plunk on the head, dropping the spider to the ground.* – adapted from J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

> *The ducks come on swift, silent wings, gliding through the treetops as if guided by radar, twisting, turning, never touching a twig in that thick growth of trees that surrounded the lake."* – Jack Denton Scott *The Wondrous Wood Duck*

> *Hating himself, repulsed by what he was doing, Harry forced the goblet back toward Dumbledore's mouth and tipped it for Dumbledore to drink the remainder of the horrible potion inside.* – J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*

## Five Tools – page 2

**3. Identifier** (Appositive): These phrases start with an article (like *"a," "an,"* or *"the"*), and are made of nouns, and are used to identify the noun that sits right next to it in the sentence.

> *A balding, smooth-faced man, he could have been anywhere between forty and sixty.* – Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

> *In an armchair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see. She was dressed in rich materials, satins, and lace and silks, all of white.*
> – Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

> *One night, the twentieth of March, 1888, I was returning from a journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice), when my way led me through Baker Street.* – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

**4. Elaborators** (Absolute Phrases): These combine the Identifier and the Describer into a literary great that tells about a noun that is doing something. Elaborators are good for zooming in on a subject and describing it in greater detail. HINT: Funny thing about Elaborators is if you added the word "was" or "were" to it, the Elaborator would be a complete sentence on its own.

> *A teenager in a blank tank top, a greenish tattoo flowing across her back, hoisted a toddler.* -- Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*

> *Holly strapped on her mechanical harness, her wings extending with the touch of a button.* -- adapted from Eoin Colfer, *Artemis Fowl, The Eternity Code*

**5. Relatives** (Relative Clauses): Some clauses begin *with "who," "which,"* and *"whose,"* or for things they begin with: *"that"* or *"which."* These phrases are helpful for identifying people, and/or adding more detail to your sentences … but watch out because sometimes you'll need to add a comma and sometimes you won't. It's all up to Rule #1 of English, sadly.

> *Sully, whose skills were already maturing, moved up from the Wolves level to the Lions.* -- Stephen King, *Hearts in Atlantis*

> *The blood that soaked through his shirt was still warm. I could feel him breathing.*
> -- Ransom Riggs, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*

## But wait, there's more!

Along with these basic 5 Tools, you can use Adjectives and Adverbs as Chunks, moving them about, with commas, to add detail. Now I know, I have said elsewhere that you should avoid using Adjectives and Adverbs – but what you should avoid is the standard way of placing adjectives before a noun. Move them about, set them up as a Chunk, out of order in the sentence, and your Adjectives become more stylish and useful. Like this:

**The Opener** A modifier (adjective or adverb) at the start of a sentence can get you off to a good start, describing the subject in more detail and what he/she is doing.
Remember: **Adjectives**: which one/what kind/how many
**Adverbs**: how/when/how much/where

*"Numb of all feeling, empty as a shell, still he clung to life and the hours droned by."*
-- JK Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*

*"Then, slowly, he fell to his knees and pitched forward onto the road."*

**The Delayer** A modifier (adjective or adverb) that is delayed until the middle of the sentence, sitting next to the word it modifies, and set off by commas.

*"He worked himself to death, finally and precisely, at 3:00 a.m. Sunday morning."*
-- Ellen Goodman, *Close to Home*

*"People under the helicopter ducked, afraid, as if they were being visited by a god."*
-- Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*

### As an added bonus, here is one more Chunk for you to use.

**6. Effects** (Relative Clauses): Another verb form, an infinitive, this one starts with the word *"to"* but is not a prepositional phrase. Think of someone yelling, *"To infinity and beyond!"* The infinitive phrase tells you why someone is doing something, what the goal or effect is supposed to be. So, an infinitive is the word *"to"* and the root form of a verb, such as *"run"* giving us the phrase: *"to run."*

*To get his feet wet in such a freezing temperature meant trouble and danger.*
-- Jack London, *To Build a Fire*

*Suddenly, she had an overwhelming desire to see what was behind the other doors.* -- Hal Borland, *When the Legends Die*

# Lego Linguistics
# "Seeing is Understanding"

Just for fun let's look at how sentences are formed, using Lego blocks to help visualize the results. This is simply another way of describing the process of using Chunks. If this helps, good; if this confuses you, please ignore it.

We'll start by assigning different parts of our sentences to different colored bricks. As you know from Rule #2, the basic English sentence is SVO. The subject is some kind of a noun phrase – maybe a pronoun like "I" or "She." The Subject might also be a noun with some added words like "The tractor" or "His bike" or even "Running a marathon." Verbs are the action words telling you what the subject is doing or has done or will do or might have … well, you get the idea. Objects are any extra words needed to allow the SVO to be a complete thought. Simple. That is, the basic SVO is a Simple Sentence. What follows is how we take a Simple Sentence and turn it into more exciting things like Complex Sentences (Periodic, Cumulative), and Compound Sentences and the mash-up of these known as the Compound Complex one. And with that, we might be better off just going to the graphics.

**Subject = Noun or Pronoun (plus Article)** 

**Verb = Action** 

**Object = The rest of the Sentence (if needed)** 

**Modifier = Adjective/Adverb** 

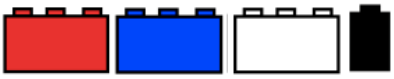
**Conjunction = FANBOYS** 

**Chunk = The Tools listed above** 

**Comma**  **Semicolon**  **Period/Question Mark/Exclamation** 

**This means that the basic sentence / SVO looks like this:**

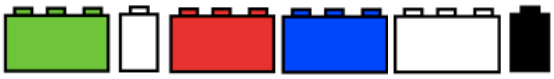
***I went to the store.***



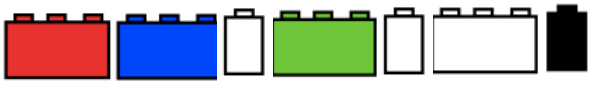
---

## Adding Chunks to a Simple Sentence

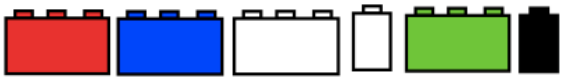
*"After lunch, I went to the store."*



*"I went, after lunch, to the store."*



*"I went to the store, after lunch."*



## Compounds

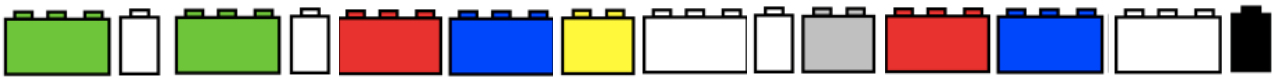
*"I went to the store, and I bought some cookies."*

*"I went to the store; I bought some cookies."*

## Compound-Complex

*"After lunch, I went to the store, and I bought some cookies."*

*"In a hurry, feeling stressed, I went quickly to the store, and I grabbed lunch."*



---

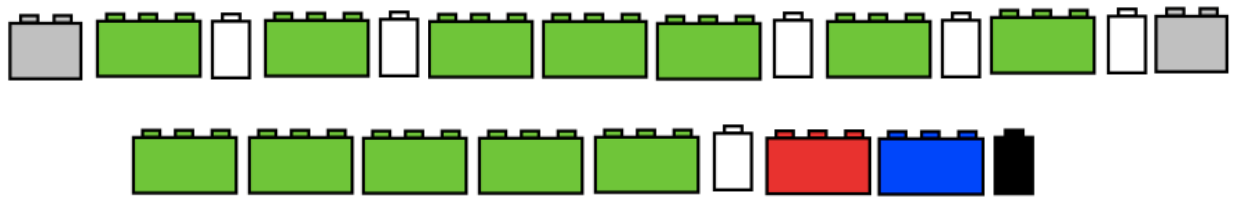
# Special Sentences

Authors often use different kinds of sentences to show action or to create suspense. Without getting too overly complicated here, we can identify 4 of the most common types of sentences. Here is how they look when built using Lego Linguistics:

**Periodic Sentences** – here all the chunks come before the SVO, leaving the action, the verb, until the very end. Periodic sentences were once common in Literature (See Charles Dickens for example) but today have become less common. Here is an example, first in normal print form, and then in a graphic format. Notice how the details give a sense of suspense to the text:

> *"And when Jarvis Lorry saw the kindled eyes, the resolute face, the calm strong look and bearing of the man whose life always seemed to him to have been stopped, like a clock, for so many years, and then set going again with an energy which had lain dormant during the cessation of its usefulness, he believed."* -- Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Here is what this sentence looks like in Legos! Notice all the Chunks coming before the Subject.



**Balanced Sentences** – Instead of adding complexity to a Simple Sentence, to make a Balanced one you add symmetry. Here is where authors use parallel structures, where one part of the sentence looks like another grammatically. Why use one? The better questions is "When?" Balanced Sentences allow the author to compare and contrast two ideas, to set up an antithesis (opposites), and to make a line that is easy to remember. Politicians use this form often, as do poets, though otherwise the two have little enough in common. Again, this form was popular in the 1800's, and a bit less so now, but once you learn to recognize them, you will begin to see them more often.

> *"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich …"* -- President J F Kennedy

> *"The ambition of the novice is to acquire the Literary Language; the struggle of the adept is to get rid of it."* – George Bernard Shaw

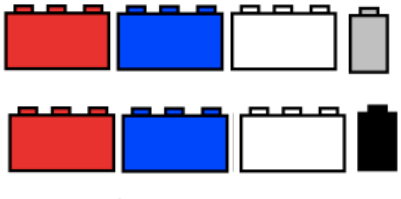
---

There is no real need to show one of these sentences – it is as simple as our original example of a Compound Sentence. Notice that the format is identical on both sides of the comma, which acts like a balancing point in the middle of the sentence. (Hence a Balanced Sentence, right?)
**NOTE:** For those of you who are overachievers, here both sides are almost equal, with the first part being a Dependent Clause which is why there is a comma and not a semicolon acting as the central balancing point.

*Conj. Subject Verb Object / Chunk , Subject Verb Object / Chunk.*
*If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.*

In this example, the separate sections are equal, forming two complete sentences (SVO's / Independent Clauses) which are then separated by a semicolon for the balancing point:

*"The ambition of the novice is to acquire the Literary Language;*
*the struggle of the adept is to get rid of it."*



**Fragment** Though Sentence Fragments are often marked as "wrong" by English teachers everywhere, authors just as often use them in their writing to make a short quick statement for emphasis. Fragments can be jarring and simple; they can come as a break after a series of long sentences, or as a short, sharp statement, filled with the emotions of yelling, "Score," or "Watch out!" Fragments are easy to write when you don't mean to, but also useful to write when you do so on purpose. All you need do is leave out a Subject or a Verb, or start with a Dependent word – and so, write a Chunk instead of an SVO.

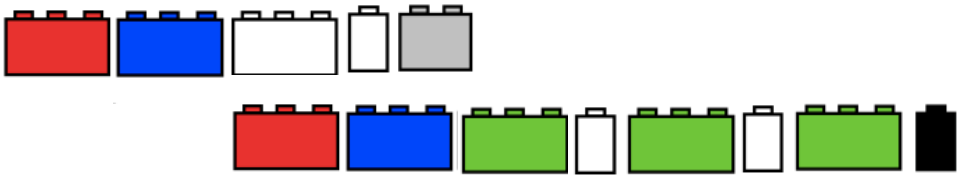
> *He was forever following the man in the raincoat. He stood out in the rain all night at times, shadowing the man he was paid to follow. It was a tough job, and he wasn't getting paid enough. Nope, not enough.*

"Not enough" is not enough grammatically to be a sentence. There is no S or V here. And yet, it works in the text, emphasizing the thoughts of the man in the rain. Just don't do this too often.

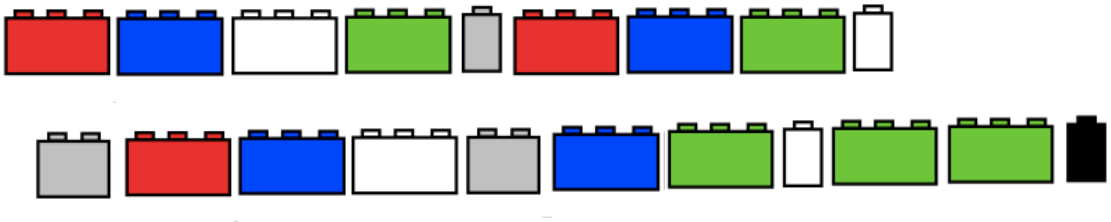
---

**Cumulative / Loose Sentences** A Cumulative Sentence (also known as a Loose Sentence) is a Chunky SVO, only more so. Cumulative Sentences accumulate (grab onto, collect) Chunks to add details to it's main SVO, which usually appears at the start. A very detailed and Chunky sentence that had the SVO at the end would be the Periodic Sentence we have already seen. This one acts like a normal SVO only it is bigger and stronger and rolls along, adding Chunks, collecting images, deepening understanding all the way until the final period. Like that. Or this:

> *Harry snapped the book shut, but the shriek went on and on, one high, unbroken, earsplitting note.* – JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*



> *He passed Filch in the doorway; Filch's pale, wild eyes looked straight through him, and Harry slipped under Filch's outstretched arm and streaked off up the corridor, the book's shrieks still ringing in his ears.* – JK Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*



In the end this is a Compound-Complex Sentence. However:

**NOTE: What makes you call it a Cumulative Sentence is** how the sentence branches off from the first SVO "He passed Filch." From there the details are added on branching always to the right, adding more and more green blocks (Chunks) to explain what happened after those first few words about "passing Filch."

**NOTE: What makes this a good sentence and not a Run-on is** that everything that appears in the sentence is simply added detail to that original three-word SVO.

# 5 5 Checklists & More

## Recursive Writing Process

### Or Why "Just Good Enough" Never Really Is

A writer is never done. One famous author said, a good writer is always either spending time writing or thinking about writing. It's a process. So is revising what you have written. Whatever you have written can always be revised, and should be, until you express exactly what you are trying to say so others can best understand it.

### Why Bother?

**Follow these five steps and you'll find that your papers get easier, take less time, and are better written in the end.**

**Prewriting** If you have been given the topic by the teacher, consider how you want to write about it. Pull apart the prompt and use the SQR process to brainstorm ideas to write about. **HINT:** For more on "Pulling apart a Prompt," see Section 4.

**Writing** Just start writing ... your first draft is just a place to start. Since you will not be turning in this first draft, it can be messy and bad. Instead of trying to be done fast or to be perfect the first time around, focus simply on getting your ideas on paper. Don't worry about grammar or spelling or neatness. **HINT:** Use your notes and charts from brainstorming in the Prewriting phase if you are stuck.

**Revising – Paragraphs** Start large. Look at the organization of your paper and how to improve your outline. Make it easier for your reader to understand your ideas. **HINTS:**

- Look for what needs to be added, or taken out of the paper to make your points clearer.
- Rearrange paragraphs or sentences if necessary, to make your arguments stronger.
- Make sure you have strong topic sentences, a good opening, and a good conclusion.

**Editing – Sentences** Now zoom in a bit and look at the sentences in each paragraph. Make sure you have used a variety of sentence styles and lengths; look for run-ons and fragments. Add detail and style to your sentences through chunks, imagery, and literary devices. **HINT:** Read your sentences out loud and listen for anything that does not sound right. Trust your ears.

**Proofreading – Words, Punctuation, Formatting** Zoom in a bit more and look at the words in the sentences. Check spelling; look for contractions; make sure you have capital letters and proper punctuation. Give one last look to make sure you have used MLA formatting. Add citations after quotes. **HINT:** Use the checklists provided here to look for common things to fix.

# Step 1: Prewriting

Take a few minutes to organize your thoughts. For a short essay, use a basic plan for writing such as the APEC format in Section 5. Line up your main pieces of evidence and then choose how to answer what the prompt is asking. For longer essays, start with a clear Thesis Statement and then organize your points in a way to support your main claim.

## Try any of these tips to Prewriting:

- **Talk things through** with yourself. Ask yourself "So what?" Listen to the things that come to mind and write down any words, phrases, or ideas that could be useful later.
- **Use the WHAT/HOW/WHY system** to help you brainstorm your Thesis Statement, and then use the WHAT/HOW/WHY to organize your whole essay. For more on this, check out the "connect the Dots" workbook.
- **Use graphic organizers** to put your random thoughts into some order. As you do, you may begin to see some sort of pattern to your thoughts or a way you could group ideas in paragraphs.
- **Read** something that others have written about your topic to get other ideas for yourself. Reading what others have said can help you think about things differently.
- **Summarize:** Write just one sentence to describe what you want to say in the paper. Make it clear and concise. Make sure someone else can understand what it is you want to say. If you can't summarize your thoughts in one sentence you are not yet focused.
- **Analogy:** Think of an analogy for what you are trying to say. How is your topic like something else that you already know about? How could you describe your topic with an analogy that would help your audience understand your point better?
- **Free Association:** From a short list of words about your topic, try some free association. What other words come to your mind as you think about each one. Write these new words down as well, and look for any that bring more associations.

## Also ask yourself what kind of paper you are writing:

- **Narrative paragraphs:** Tell a story. Work chronologically from start to finish. At least at first. Keep the reader's attention by leaving some details until later.
- **Expository:** Provide specific details about what you are describing. Employ imagery; give examples.
- **Argumentative:** Proceed from Topic Sentence through evidences and finish with a Conclusion based on your evidence.
- **Analysis:** Separate topics into groups or break topic into smaller pieces in order to analyze each in turn. Explain the pieces, step by step, or in order of importance.

# Hooks (Introductions that Grab Your Reader)

| Name of Hook | Example |
|---|---|
| | |
| **The Challenge** | *"Today I am going to ask you to do something very difficult, but something that will change the world."* |
| **The Provocative Question** | *"What would you do if you had no money and your family was starving? Would robbery be justified?"* |
| **The Powerful Quote** | *"What's in your wallet?"* A relevant quotation from a famous source can be effective. The quote loses impact, however, if the audience does not know the quote or does not recognize the author. |
| **The Surprising Statistic** | *"The average internet user spends fewer than ten seconds on a web page before moving on."* |
| **The Unusual Fact** | *"There is a patch of garbage the size of Texas floating in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is made up of plastic and debris that has been caught in the currents in the ocean."* |
| **The Personal Story** | *"I remember when I was fourteen and broke my arm. That was one hot, long, summer."* |
| **The Unexpected** | *"I have been multitasking my entire life, I am always doing several things at once. I believe multitasking has ruined my brain."* |
| **The Humorous Opening** | *"I have been multitasking my entire life, I am always doing several things at once. Right now I am speaking to you, watching a ball game on my phone and doing a load of laundry back at the hotel."* |
| **The Teaser** | *Three minutes from now, I will tell you something that you will never forget as long as you live."* |
| | |

# Some Organizational Strategies for Essays

| Type of Organization | Example |
|---|---|
| | |
| **Chronological** | *First you need two slices of bread. You also need to get the PB and the Jelly and a knife. To begin, you …* |
| **Problem and Solution** | *The problem with PB &J sandwiches is spreading the PB on the bread without tearing the bread, or making a mess with the jelly. To fix this you only need …* |
| **Compare and Contrast** | *The best PB&J sandwiches have a proper balance between the amount of jelly and the amount of PB. A terrible PB&J will leak jelly all over the place …* |
| **Geographical / Spatial** | *Choose first the type of PB: chunky or creamy. When it comes to choosing the jelly, know what flavors you have in the frig before you get your hopes up. Then …* |
| **Order of Importance** | *I don't care what kind of bread I use to make the sandwich as long as it is toasted. But I have to have grape jelly. Nothing else will do …* |
| **Personal Narrative** | *I remember m y first PB&J sandwich. It was given to me when I first came to school in this country. I had never tried one before and didn't know what it was.* |
| **Argument/Persuasion** | *The best PB&J sandwiches are made by my mother. She knows just how to make them and which ingredients work best. For instance …* |
| **Topical** | *In making a PB&J one should consider the following items: the choice of PB, the type of jam, the bread to be used, and the manner of creating the sandwich.* |
| | |

# Step 2: Writing

Sometimes you have to just take a deep breath and start. Staring at a blank page or trying to write the best first sentence ever, gets you nowhere. As Ernest Hemmingway, a famous author, once said, "There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter ... and bleed."

## So write. Just write. Edit later. Correct later. Just write for now.

**1. Thesis Statements.** Write a thesis statement based on your Brainstorming and charting the WHAT/HOW/WHY to answer the prompt. Then **write a Thesis with these pieces.** From the thesis you should be able to know where to go next. See the "Connecting the Dots" workbook for the details of Thesis Statements. For now look at this example of a Thesis Statement:

*In the play Hamlet, by William Shakespeare, the main actor seems to be unable to make up his mind about taking revenge for his father's death. The author conveys this sense of indecision through the main Character's lack of action, his manner of pretending to be crazy, and in the words of the famous soliloquy "To be or not to be."*

**This Thesis Statement follows a familiar pattern**. The first sentence tells us the author, name of the work we're reading, and a claim about the play (the main actor seems unable to make up his mind). The next sentence gives three explanations of this claim. Once you have a statement like this you know that Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 will each look at one of the three reasons for the claim (lack of action, pretension of madness, soliloquy), then paragraph 5 will be a Conclusion.

**2. Quote your Texts.** Another way to show you are familiar with a text you were asked to read, or that you have done some additional research, is to quote from the texts. By quoting other experts you show that you have gone deeper into the subject. You can offer the opinions of those who have greater expertise in your topic; you can provide important information that you could not have known on your own. **Not sure when to quote?**

- Quote a source when the source has explained a concept in words that are particularly well written, or is expressed in a way you could not paraphrase adequately.
- Quote a source to add additional evidence to your ideas, especially when you are not an expert in that area. While most of your writing should be in your own words, quotes from expert sources can add evidence of truth to your supporting examples/evidence.
- However, do not follow one quote with another quote.
- Do not use too many quotes; instead, paraphrase the information you have found.
- Make sure to **Hug the Quotes**, using explanations and transitions between each quote.

# Step 3: Revising Paragraphs

When you have finished your First Draft, it's time to get organized. This is **Revision.** Start by looking at the structure of your paragraphs. For instance, in a standard five paragraph essay:

**Paragraph 1** Introduces the topic of the paper, includes a Thesis Statement and/or Hook

**Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4** Provide evidence (quotes, data) and explanations to support the claim made in the Thesis Statement in Paragraph 1

**Paragraph 5** Concludes the paper by summing up the evidence and explaining how it has proven the initial claim in the Thesis Statement. The Conclusion may include a Counter-Argument, if one has not been included in earlier paragraphs

---

**1. What's Next? A good place to start when revising is to make sure the paragraphs have a purpose and are tied back to the initial paragraph.** In the Prewriting Stage you were asked to keep your purpose for writing clear. That purpose should be stated in your Thesis Statement back in your opening paragraph. Find it. Read it. Remember it as you revise the rest of your work. Make sure that everything ties back to the Thesis Statement in some way.

**2. Next, remember your audience.** Remember for whom you are writing this paper. Who is your audience? Have you written in a way they will understand? Have you used language, images, evidence, and/or examples that connect with your audience? Have you not only addressed your topic, but also addressed the concerns of your audience?

**3. Focus, focus, focus.** Check the focus of the paper: Is it appropriate to the assignment? Is the topic too big or too narrow? Do you stay on track through the entire paper? Do you repeat things too often? Are some statements you make unsupported -- meaning they do not have any evidence to support them? Are your paragraphs logical and help prove your Assertion/Thesis?

**4. Look for what you need to add or subtract** by doing a very quick read through of your text. Anything that sounds rambling or unfocused should be cut. Anything that does not connect to your Thesis can be put aside ... Now read your text again slowly and **look for the Transitions** you have used to tie your thoughts together. Do you need to add some more Transition words to make ideas better connected and clearer? (See next page.)

**5. Finally, go back and read just your Introduction and then your Conclusion.** Do they still match up? Do you end up addressing the things you introduced? Does your Conclusion connect with your Thesis Statement? Does the last paragraph tie the paper together smoothly and end with a strong sentence, or does the paper just die a slow, redundant, lame, or abrupt death?

# Five Flavors of Transitions

Transitions are word that help your reader understand how the ideas you are putting down are connected to one another. Generally, Transitions provide the reader with directions for how to piece together your ideas into a logically coherent argument. In providing the reader with these important cues, Transitions help readers understand the logic of how your ideas fit together.

(1) the order in which you have chosen to present the different parts of your discussion or argument, and
(2) the relationships you construct between these parts

**Use Transitions within paragraphs** to keep your ideas in order, show examples, explain effects.

**Use Transitions to start paragraphs** to show how your main ideas are connected to each other.

**But please … <u>never use the words "In conclusion"</u>** to start your last sentence or paragraph! Be more creative, and try one of these instead:

# Examples of the five flavors of transitions

| **Addition Clues** | **Time Clues** | **Illustration** | **Compare & Contrast** | **Cause & Effect** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| First (of all) | Before | For example | As, Like | Therefore |
| Second | Previously | For instance | Just as | Thus |
| Secondly | Now | Such as | Likewise | Consequently |
| Third … | Immediately | Including | In the same | So |
| Also | Then | Specifically | Similarly | As a result |
| In addition | Following | To be specific | But | Since |
| Furthermore | Laster | To illustrate | Yet | Because |
| Finally | During | One | However | If … then |
| Another | After | Once | Although | Accordingly |
| Next | While | So | Instead | Leads to |
| Moreover | Eventually | | Still | Results in |
| Last (of all) | Finally | | While | Due to |
| | | | Even though | |

# Step 4: Editing Sentences

You may have heard the words "editing" and "proofreading" used in similar ways. They are different; they have different purposes and use different skills. Let's define them this way:

- **Editing** is the process of refining a paper that is basically complete by considering how the author can improve the quality of the sentences within each paragraph.
- **Proofreading** will focus more on words, spelling, punctuation, capitalization and formatting. These we leave until the very end.

Editing gives you a chance to improve the way you express your ideas. You may change words, sentence organization and so, some punctuation, in order to make your writing more vibrant and exciting. Editing your sentences gives you a chance to find a more effective way to write.

## Editing Hints

With each new part of the writing process, you need to slow down. Revising is slower than writing, and editing is slower than revising. Proofreading is the slowest part of the process. Now please understand that Proofreading is neither the most important nor the longest part of the writing process, just the slowest, meaning you need to slow down in order to catch mistakes and fix them. **Because it takes time to edit and proof, you need to leave yourself enough time to complete these steps.** Otherwise, your writing will look sloppy and sound unprofessional.

1. Check your sentences over. Make sure you have used a variety of sentence styles (Simple, Compound, Complex, Com-Com), and that you have short, medium, and long sentences.

2. Read each sentence out loud to yourself and listen to the words. Does the sentence sound like something you would say? Listen for Fragments – incomplete thoughts.

3. Next, read sentences without stopping, except where you have placed punctuation like commas and periods. If you end up being out of breath, you may have Run-On sentences.

4. Look for commas – sentences without commas are lacking "Chunks," meaning they may be lacking imagery and detail. Look for sentences that need to be lengthened and strengthened.

5. Look again at your verbs and replace common verbs with more vivid, active ones. Make sure that your sentences are in an active voice not a passive one, whenever possible.

6. Make sure you do not time travel – make sure all your sentences use consistent verb tenses.

**HINT: Working from a printed version of your text makes editing easier.**

# Step 5: Proofreading Words

When you are done with sentences it is time to look closely at what is left – words and punctuation. Proofing is that final step where you make sure everything is ready to publish (or turn in for a grade). It's during proofing you can catch those last minute errors that can look silly if not caught before you press "Send."

Misspelled words or improper punctuation can turn a reader off from what you have written. You may have had some wonderful things to say, but if you use poor spelling, grammar, or punctuation, your message will not get through. If you end up having trouble with proofing (and most of us do) ask someone else to proof your paper for you after you have proofed it. A second set of eyes can really help you find the mistakes you missed on your own. **HINT:** Make sure to turn on your computer's Blue Lines feature. Ask Mr. S. if you need help doing this.

## Proofreading Hints:

- Use the attached Proofreading Checklist if that helps.
- Proofreading is a process where you look through your paper for one problem at a time.
- Slow down and look at each word for spelling errors. Use spell check in Microsoft WORD. Remember Google Docs may not automatically grammar/spell check for you.
- Look at each sentence for capital letters and punctuation marks.
- Remember to capitalize names and places.
- Titles of longer works (Books) are in *Italic*; shorter works get "Quotation Marks."
- Make sure your quotes have the correct punctuation marks.
- Then check to see that you have correctly placed In-line Citations after your quotes.
- Search for contractions and replace them.
- Search for the word "It" and then, "Get the 'it' out of your paper."
- Whenever possible, replace pronouns (them, that, those, these, this, him, her, it …) with more descriptive words.

Finally, look for the kinds of mistakes you know you make over and over again. Chances are you have made a similar mistake in this paper. Habits are hard to change ... but you can change them when you pay attention.

**Formatting your paper:**
Make sure you have your name on the paper, as well as the name of the teacher and the name of the assignment. Always follow the MLA formatting provided back in Cheat Sheet 2; that means double spacing your paper, using the right fonts and size, etc.

# Revision Checklist (Paragraphs & Organization)

| Yes | No | Checklist for Review |
|---|---|---|
| | | **Purpose:** Have you answered the prompt, including all the requirements? Have you clearly explained your Assertion/Thesis Statement/WHY? |
| | | **Audience:** Have you written with an audience/reader in mind? Are you using vocabulary and examples that will be effective with your audience? Have you included anything that might be offensive to your audience? |
| | | **Thesis Statement:** Is your statement in Paragraph 1? Does it introduce your text, make an Assertion, and give 2-3 themes/ways in which you will prove the claim? Is it Clear / Concise / Complete? In other words is it easy to understand what you are claiming / is it written briefly and without jargon, unnecessary details / does it fully answer your prompt or fit your task? |
| | | **Structure:** Does each paragraph start with a Topic Sentence that ties back to your Thesis Statement/Claim in Paragraph 1? Do you provide evidence to support your Topic Sentence within this paragraph? |
| | | **Quotes/Citations:** Have you used evidence from your text, or from other sources to support your claim? Have you added In-line Citations for all quotes? |
| | | **Transitions:** Do you connect your paragraphs to each other with Transitions? Are your thoughts in each paragraph ordered and connected using Transitions? |
| | | **Focus:** Read your paper out loud to yourself and listen for anything that sounds awkward. Remove material that does not keep you focused on the claim. |
| | | **Introduction/Conclusion:** Make sure your Conclusion reviews the evidence you have given and shows how it all proves/supports your Thesis Statement. Add a Counter-claim? Make sure you DO NOT use the words “In conclusion.” |

# Editing Checklist (Sentences)

| Yes | No | Checklist for Review |
|---|---|---|
| | | **Length:** Do you have a variety of long, short, medium sized sentences? |
| | | **Variety:** Do you use Simple, Compound, Complex and Com-Com sentences? |
| | | **Fragments:** Make sure all of your sentences are complete thoughts. Make sure there are no Fragments (the ones starting with Dependent words). |
| | | **Run-ons:** Do your sentences have too many ideas, too many conjunctions (and, but, because, so, etc.) and too few periods? If you read your sentences out loud, do you run out of breath before you get to a period? |
| | | **Comma Splices:** Have you glued together two SVO/Simple Sentences with only a comma instead of a semicolon, or a comma and one of the FANBOYS? |
| | | **Chunks:** Have you included detail and imagery in your sentences by using Chunks? Hint: To answer this, look for commas and added phrases and clauses in your sentences. If you don't see many, add more detail and imagery to better describe your ideas, explain your claims, and engage your reader. |
| | | **Verbs:** Do all of your sentences stay in the same time zone? If your verbs are in the past, do they stay in the past, or if you start in the present do you stay in the present? Check to make sure your verb tenses match and are consistent. |
| | | **Voice:** Have you written your sentences in the Active Voice whenever possible? That means you have used the standard SVO pattern (*I threw the ball.*), instead of a passive pattern with its missing subject (*The ball was thrown.*). |

# Proofreading Checklist (Words, Punctuation, & Formatting)

| Yes | No | Checklist for Review |
|---|---|---|
| | | **Spelling:** Have you used Spell Check AND have you also used your own eyes to look for spelling mistakes? Make sure to spell all names correctly (especially the name of your teacher, and the book or author you are reading)! |
| | | **Capitalization:** Have you used capital letters at the start of sentences, at the start of long quotes, and for all names, proper nouns, titles? |
| | | **Titles:** Have you shown titles to longer works (books) with Italics; have you shown shorter works (poems, articles, plays, songs) with "_____" marks? Remember to Capitalize the first word, the last word, and all the best of the rest of the words in a title. |
| | | **Apostrophes:** Did you search your document for apostrophes to make sure you replaced all contractions with words? |
| | | **Quotes:** Have you used the correct punctuation for adding quotes to sentences (comma or colon)? Have you added Quotation Marks at the start and end of your quotes? Have you put In-line Citations in parentheses after the quotes, but before the final period? |
| | | **Header:** Did you add in your name, class, period, date and teacher's name on page 1 of the essay (and only page 1)? |
| | | **Format:** Have you used the correct formatting – make sure your paper is set to have double-spaced lines, Times New Roman font, 12 point size, with 1 inch margins, and paragraph indents of ½ inch. |
| | | **Works Cited Page:** Make sure to add in a separate page for your Works Cited if required for this assignment, with your name on the top. |

# Peer Review Checklist

| Checklist | Yes/No | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Is there an **introduction**? Does the intro grab your attention and make you want to read more? | **Y N** | |
| Does the paper seem **organized** and follow a logical format? | **Y N** | |
| Is there a brief, clear **Thesis Statement**; does each paragraph have a Topic Sentence that connects back to the Thesis? | **Y N** | |
| Are there **supporting details** and evidence to support the Thesis? | **Y N** | |
| Do the **sentences show a variety** in structure (simple, compound, complex), and in length? Do the sentences use chunks? | **Y N** | |
| Are there many grammar and spelling mistakes that make the paper hard to understand? | **Y N** | |
| Does the **conclusion** sum up the arguments and connect back to the Thesis Statement? | **Y N** | |
| Other Comments | **Y N** | |

# Editing and Proofing Marks

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  | Capitalize | Change the first letter of this word to a capital |
|  | Make lowercase | Change the first letter of this word to a lowercase |
|  | Add punctuation | Add a period or comma to this sentence |
|  | Add word/phrase | Add words or a phrase here |
| X | Remove word/phrase | Remove a word or phrase from here |
|  | Spelling mistake | A word is spelled incorrectly here |
| NS | Run-on | Not a Sentence<br>Too many ideas are joined in one sentence |
| | Comma-Splice | Not a Sentence<br>Two sentences have been joined with a comma |
| Frag | Fragment | This is not a complete thought/sentence |
| VT | Verb Tense | Your verbs do not match in this passage |
| AWK | Awkward/Confusing | The author's ideas are hard to understand here |
| ~~Delete~~ | Delete | Delete the word/phrase/sentence from here |
| ¶ | New Paragraph | Indent and add a new paragraph starting here |