

# Ride the Rainbow Books Writing Tips

## *Show, Don't Tell*

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**Instead of telling the readers the story, show them the story. Don't tell us what Mindy is experiencing, show us. Make the reader see, feel and experience. What is the character seeing? What is the character feeling? What is the character experiencing? Make use of the five senses, sight, sound, smell, touch and taste.**

Telling - Mindy didn't like the way Bill's shoes smelled.

Showing - Mindy could smell the wretched odor from where she stood. or The wretched smell from Bill's shoes wafted across the room assaulting Mindy's nose.

Telling - Mindy was nervous waiting for Bill to call.

Showing - Mindy paced around the room, wearing down the nap in the carpet. The knot in her stomach grew as she waited for Bill's phone call.

Telling - Mindy was tired and had a hard time keeping her eyes open.

Showing - Mindy rubbed her heavy eyes. She blinked several times in an effort to keep them open.

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## *Active Voice vs. Passive Voice*

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Using any form of "to be" followed by the past participle (walked, ran, ate, lived, talked,) constitutes the passive voice.

Is	Have been
Are	Had been
Am	Will be
Was	Will have been
Were	Being
Has been	

Passive –Bill was going to the store.

Active - Bill went to the store.

Passive -The dress was worn by her sister

Active - Her sister wore the dress.

Passive - The book has been borrowed by Tony.

Active - Tony borrowed the book.

As a general rule, use passive voice sparingly. However, some situations call for it:

When you want to emphasize the object more than the subject.

Example: Over five different poisons were found in his system.

If your readers don't need to know who's responsible for the action.

Example: The gold has been stolen.

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## Point Of View

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If you are writing in third person subjective, in which you are using “he,” “she,” “it,” “they,” but never “I,” then it’s important to control which character’s point of view your reader is experiencing the story through.

You can use more than one characters POV in a story, but it is important to only use one POV in a scene. Otherwise, your reader will feel like they are “head jumping.”

Let’s look at a scene with multiple characters: Mindy, Liz, and Bill.

If the scene is in Mindy’s POV, then we only see, hear, smell, feel and taste what Mindy does. The only internal thoughts in that scene are Mindy’s thoughts. If Bill is handsome but Mindy finds him disgusting, and we are in Mindy’s POV, the words to describe Bill wouldn’t be flattering. Instead it might be something like this...*Mindy watched Bill saunter up to Liz. He looked like he spent hours getting every little piece of hair on his head glued in place. His smile revealed teeth far too white to be their natural shade. They appeared even brighter against his fake tan.*

But let’s say Liz likes Bill. Her POV is different. Same guy, same handsome features, different take on it.

*Bill walked up to Liz. He looked handsome as ever, every hair in place. His wide smile appeared even brighter against his rugged tan skin.*

An example of mixing POV - *Mary could smell the musky odor from across the room. It turned her stomach. She couldn’t understand why anyone would be so sentimental over old shoes. Bill picked up the shoes, feeling the cracks in the soft, worn leather. These old shoes meant something to him. My Dad gave me these shoes, he thought.*

In the first three sentences we are in Mindy’s POV. In the next three sentences we are in Bill’s POV.

If you are changing POV anywhere other than between chapters, it is a good idea to show the change using something like \*\*\*

*Mary could smell the musky odor from across the room. It turned her stomach. She couldn’t understand why anyone would be so sentimental over old shoes*

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*Bill picked up the shoes, feeling the cracks in the soft, worn leather. These old shoes meant something to him. My Dad gave me these shoes, he thought.*

Be careful when we are in a character’s point of view and you are trying to describe that character. I has to be done in such a way that the character would do it.

Wrong - Margo brushed her lush, long blond hair. The overhead light bounced off of it giving it a beautiful glow. She looked into the mirror at her beautiful, green eyes.

Right – Margo brushed her hair. It was longer than she normally wore it, but she didn’t have time for a trim. She applied brown eye shadow to her lids. Margo thought it brought out the green in her eyes.

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Another way to do it would be in another person's point of view to describe her. Lisa walked past Margo and caught a whiff of her hair. Her lush, blond hair looked lighter under the overhead lights. The green of her eyes was enhanced by the expertly applied eye shadow.

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Note: If you are having trouble choosing whose POV to use in a scene, choose the character whose reaction, thoughts, and feelings will move the story along the best — or the who stronger emotional response to the scene.

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**Filler words, weak verbs and overused words weaken your story. Comb your manuscript for these words and try to eliminate the majority of them.**

### *Filler Words*

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Just	All
That	Started
Had	So
As	Was – Change was dancing to danced
Almost	

Wrong – She had sung the song off key.

Right - She sang the song off key.

Wrong – She started to get in her car.

Right – She got in her car.

Wrong – She knew that he had brown eyes.

Right – She knew he had brown eyes.

### *Weak Verbs*

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Began/Begun	Had been
Walk	Have been
Move	Came
Heard/Hear	Seem(s)
Watch	Tried
Saw/See	Appear(s)
Look	There is, There are
Reach	Bring, Brought
Went	Something
Has been	Were

“ly” adverbs are weak – Examples include nearly, finally, quickly, loudly, etc

### *Overused Words*

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Certainly  
Really  
Quite  
Just  
Well  
Due to the fact

## *Proper Use of Words*

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Okay – Not OK

All right – Not alright

Goodnight – Not goodnight

Good-bye – Not goodbye

No “s” on toward, forward, backward

## *Misc*

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- Avoid redundancies - Stood up, ran quickly, etc
  - Instead of “turned around”- use “turned”
  - Instead of “sat down” – use “sat”
- Avoid too much detail and don’t over explain.
- Don’t use unnecessary back story.
  - Only use what moves story forward.
  - Don’t have a whole chapter on Betty buying new shoes unless the shoes also play a strong part in the story later on.
  - Don’t tell us every single thing, every single person is wearing every time they appear.
  - Don’t tell us what is in every single nook and cranny of a house.
- Avoid adverbs – use a stronger verb instead
  - Weak - He ran quickly up the hill.
  - Strong - He raced up the hill.
- Avoid starting a sentence with “as”.
  - Instead of – As she walked through the door she sang her favorite song.
  - Try something like– She walked through the door singing her favorite song.
- Avoid “ing” words to start a sentence.
  - Instead of – Walking to the door she decided to knock and let them know she was there and angry.
  - Try something like – She pounded her fist on the solid front door and heard the sound echo inside. Not waiting for an answer she pounded again, her rage boiling to the surface.

- Don't repeat the same things throughout the story – trust your readers to remember details.
- Start the book with a hook.
- End each chapter with a hook – make the reader want to continue on to the next chapter.
- Don't use names that have similar sounds. Example: Mary, Maury, Millie, Marge.
- Make sure that physical qualities stay consistent.
  - If Billy's eyes are brown in Chapter one, they better still be brown in Chapter six.
  - If Sally is taller than Jill, she better not be looking up at Jill in a later chapter, unless she is sitting or lying down.
- Dialog should move right along without dragging. For example, if five people come into a room we don't need to hear everything that was said.

The work crew entered the office. "Hi Boss," Bill said.

"Hi Bill, Hi Tom. Nice to see you Fred. How's your wife Tammy? How's it hanging Telly?"

"Hi Boss," Tom said.

"Thanks. Nice to see you too, Boss," Fred said.

"My wife is fine," Tammy said. "Our baby is due any day."

"It's hanging fine, thanks for asking," Telly said.

- You can leave words out of dialog to tighten it up and still have it make sense.
  - Wrong - "Hello Michael. How are your wife and kids? Are they doing good? I'll bet the little ones are getting big."
  - Right – "Michael. How's the wife and kids? Doing good? Getting big, I bet."