

A stylized illustration at the top of the page features a large, bright yellow sun with a smiling face, partially obscured by several light blue and white clouds. The background is a solid blue color.

What do you notice?

In the window, sitting on a wooden tripod stool, was the most gruesome memento of all: a mummy. Not the wrapped in cloth kind, but a human female body shriveled to a husk. She wore a tie-dyed sundress, lots of beaded necklaces, and a headband over long black hair. The skin of her face was thin and leathery over her skull, and her eyes were glassy white slits, as if the real eyes had been replaced with marbles; she had been dead a long, long time.

Looking at her sent chills up my back. And that's before she sat up on her stool and opened her mouth. A green mist poured from the mummy's mouth, coiling over the floor in thick tendrils, hissing like twenty thousand snakes. I stumbled over myself trying to get tot the trap door, but it slammed shut. Inside my head, I heard a voice, slithering into one ear and coiling around my brain: *I am the spirit of Delphi, speaker of the prophecies, of Phoebus Apollo, slayer of the mighty Python. Approach, seeker, and ask.*

--*The Lightning Thief* p. 140



Show Don't Tell

Why Sensory and Descriptive Details
Matter in your Writing

Step 1: Add Sensory

Details

INCLUDE sights, sounds, smells, taste, and touch sensations, so the reader can experience the event.

Telling: "The sandwich was difficult to eat."

Showing: "The cucumbers slipped out first. I squeezed the Kaiser roll together more tightly, but a tomato was soon hanging out and dripping..."

(Write Source 557).

Step 2: Encapsulate Body Language by Using Striking Verbs

Write about facial expressions and the way people stand, gesture, and move. Focus primarily on your verbs, the words that show action.

Telling: She was upset with me.

Showing: She glared at me, tapped her foot, pursed her lips, and snorted.

Showing Rather than Telling Example

Telling: The cafeteria food lunch was disgusting.

Showing: The rubbery, light grey hamburger rested atop a crusty, stale, sesame-seed bun. The dull, orange carrots were slimy slugs, lacking the crunch I craved. Lukewarm, soggy French fries sat on the side, making my stomach flip and flop from nausea. Dejected, I took my seat, my face expressionless, as I sighed and slowly reached for the ketchup.

A decorative header featuring a bright yellow sun with rays and several light blue clouds against a dark blue background.

How do I show and not tell?

- **Sensory details**—add sights, smells, tastes, touch, and sounds (when and where appropriate)
- **Describe body language and use strong verbs**
- **NEXT STEP:** Pinpoint places in your rough draft where you are telling too much. Make some changes.