

Showing vs Telling

- Enable the reader to experience the story through action, words, thoughts, senses, and feelings rather than through the author's exposition, summarization, and description.
- Not to drown the reader in heavy-handed adjectives, but rather to allow readers to experience the author's ideas by interpreting significant, well-chosen textual details.
- Sometimes a writer tells as a shortcut, to move quickly to the meaty part of the story.
- Showing requires more words; telling may cover a greater span of time more concisely. A novel that contains only showing would be incredibly long; therefore, a narrative can contain some legitimate telling.
- Hemingway's Iceberg Theory (theory of omission):
 - "If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water."
- *Telling* is dispensing information. *Showing* is evoking experience.
- How to recognize telling: simple declarative sentences that tell the reader something. The verb "was" is often a signpost of a *telling* statement.
- How to recognize showing: using behavior (action, speech, thoughts) to illustrate or dramatize what the character is feeling/doing.
- When to tell:
 - Summarize an event already shown
 - Mundane things
- When to show:
 - When you want to create an effect in the reader's mind
 - When the reader wants the experience, not an approximation or report
- Example scenario: Anna is beat from a long, bad day at work, and she's spent hours at the hospital with her father, who has been unconscious for days. You want to give the reader Anna's physical and emotional condition.
 - Telling: Anna was physically and mentally exhausted.
 - Showing: All Anna wanted to do was crawl into bed and go to sleep. But first she would cry. She didn't think she could be calm and composed for another minute.

Show vs Tell Exercise: (mark each example as showing or telling)

1. I was really surprised.
2. Jesse was very hot.
3. Jake pressed the little blue phone on his cell-phone keypad to end the call.
4. He plunged the dagger into the man's chest again and again and again, screaming "Die!" each time the blade stabbed into flesh.
5. George was so pissed.
6. He was furious when he stabbed the man
7. Peter felt like an overcooked chicken, his meat damn near ready to fall off his bones.
8. I was incredibly happy.
9. April told May how June had told Julie where to shove her opinion.
10. He wrenched her from the quicksand with a last huge pull and fell back onto the ground, panting as if he'd just won a wrestling match, temporarily drained by the supreme effort.

Show vs Tell Exercise: (rewrite each example as showing)

1. She went home in a bad mood
2. My neighbor bought a really nice old desk.
3. He was an attractive man.
4. My boyfriend/girlfriend acted like a jerk.
5. She wears really strange outfits.
6. The scenery in the mountains was beautiful.
7. My roommate is very (in)considerate.