

TEN TOP TIPS FOR WRITING A STORY

Tip	Explanation	Example
1. Show, don't tell	This is the most important technique in telling a story. Don't tell your readers how people are feeling or where they are. Use your words to describe it.	<i>As he looked round at the other patrons, Tim took a bite of his cookie and ordered another coffee without looking at the menu</i> [Tim was in a cafe] <i>Tim bit his tongue hard and his face went red: he'd never made a mistake like this before.</i> [Tim felt embarrassed]
2. Use metaphors	Use metaphors to add colour to your writing. A metaphor is when we describe one thing as if it's another.	<i>Her eyes—green emeralds set back in her slight face—looked straight through me.</i>
3. Use adverbs	In a story, the reader can't see your character. They rely on you to describe him/her. Using adverbs can be an effective way to do this. But don't overuse them as they are quite tiresome.	<i>"I've had enough," said Tom angrily.</i>
4. Don't always say "he said"	Try to use a variety of reporting words. "Said" is good, but it's not the only one.	<i>"I'm frightened," Cindy whimpered.</i>
5. Use synonyms	It's not worth writing a story unless you have good imaginations and a good vocabulary. Instead of saying 'hot', say 'scorching'; instead of saying 'confused', try 'bewildered'.	<i>'You look stunning [beautiful], my father said to me as I appeared before him in my wedding dress.</i>
6. Surprise your reader	Try to avoid clichéd or overused plots. And definitely don't steal plots from other writers (your examiner will know if you've adapted <i>Les Miserables!</i>) Use your imagination to create something totally new.	<i>[Think about the plots of the books you know – Roald Dahl, J. K. Rowling etc. These people did not get famous by repeating the same stories they'd heard before.]</i>
7. Vary your sentence structure	Stories should use a mix of long sentences and short sentences.	<i>As he sat in the auditorium, Pin remembered happier days of his boyhood in East London in a house where there was always a guest. But now he was alone. All alone.</i>
8. Get to know your characters	Make your characters realistic. Plan a little: who are they? What are they wearing? What do they look like? What job do they have? You don't have to mention all these things directly, but it will help your characters seem more realistic if you do.	<i>Jan was wearing a blue salwar kameez that took attention away from her protruding jaw and wiry hair.</i>
9. Include "irrelevant" details	Lots of (seemingly) insignificant details will make your story believable. For example, don't just say you saw a car. Say you saw a "blue Rav4 with a scratch on the front passenger door". Your reader will be more likely to believe your story if you include details like these.	<i>It was night-time when I heard the news. I remember because my clock read 23:58. I looked out of the window and saw a group of youths in baseball caps throwing a basketball around.</i>
10. Don't preach	A story is not a sermon. Don't tell your reader what to think. Let them think for themselves.	<i>And so we can see that honesty always pays</i>