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SHOW DON'T TELL

Show, don't tell is one of the most frequently given pieces of advice for writers.

It is better if story and characters are related through sensory details and actions rather than exposition. It fosters a style of writing that's more immersive for the reader, allowing them to "be in the room" with the characters.

Chekhov said, "Don't tell me the moon is shining. Show me the glint of light on broken glass."

Here's a quick example of showing versus telling:

Showing: As his mother switched off the light and left the room, Michael tensed. He huddled under the covers, gripped the sheets, and held his breath as the wind brushed past the curtain.

Telling: Michael was terribly afraid of the dark.

In this exercise writers should split up into pairs. Each partner writes down a short scene from a story where they "tell" it. After this they should pass the description of the scene to their partner, and they have 5 minutes to rewrite it to "show" what happened.

This exercise can also work individually, with each writer describing a scene where the action is 'told', and then the same scene is written with a more subtle style, 'showing' the action.