Reflection worksheet: Show, don't tell

Choose a scene from your manuscript and answer the following questions. This will help you identify where you can make emotions, actions, and sensory details more vivid:

1. **Which emotions or character traits do you explicitly describe in your scene?**

2. **How could you show these emotions through actions or body language?**

3. **What does your character perceive through their senses? Which of these sensory details could you emphasize more?**

4. **What does your character want to achieve in this scene, and what stands in their way?**

5. **What do your characters say in their dialogue, and what might they actually mean?**

6. **What information could you shorten or summarize to keep your scene from becoming too detailed?**

Checklist: Show, don't tell

Review the scene you revised earlier using the following questions and tick Yes or No for each one:

Question	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
Are important emotions conveyed through actions or body language?		
Do I use appropriate sensory details to make the scene more vivid?		
Do I describe the surroundings from my character's perspective?		
Do my characters react believably and in ways that reflect their personalities?		
Are my characters' personality traits revealed through their behavior?		
Does my character have a clear goal in the scene?		
s there an obstacle or conflict that moves the scene forward?		
Does my dialogue contribute to the plot or character development?		
Do I use subtext to convey unspoken emotions or intentions?		
Do I focus on the details that matter to the scene?		
Do I avoid explaining emotions that have already been shown?		
Do I use telling intentionally, for example, for transitions or summaries?		

Couldn't answer every question with "Yes"? Take another look at the relevant passages in your manuscript and consider how you could make your scene more vivid. Remember that not every point will apply to every scene.

Final thoughts

Show, don't tell doesn't mean you have to describe every little detail. Instead, it's about consciously deciding which moments you want your readers to experience firsthand. Use the insights from this reflection worksheet to revise your scenes with purpose. Often, even small changes can make emotions, characters, and conflicts feel more vivid.

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