

# Lesson Plan: Show, Don't Tell - Bringing Characters to Life

## Materials Needed:

- Notebook, paper, or a word processor
  - Pen or pencil
  - Optional: Whiteboard or large sheet of paper for brainstorming
  - Handout 1: "Telling vs. Showing" Sentence Challenge
  - Handout 2: "Character Idea Spark"
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## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain the difference between "showing" and "telling" in writing.
  - Change a "telling" sentence into a more descriptive "showing" sentence.
  - Write a short, engaging paragraph that introduces a character by showing their personality through actions, thoughts, or dialogue.
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## Introduction (10 minutes)

### The Secret Power of Great Storytellers

**Hook:** Think about your favorite character from a book or movie. Let's say it's Percy Jackson. The author doesn't just write, "Percy was sarcastic and brave." That's kind of boring, right? Instead, what does Percy *do* or *say* that lets us know he's sarcastic and brave? (*Pause for discussion. Guide toward examples like him making jokes in the face of danger or rushing into a fight to save his friends.*)

Great storytellers have a secret power: they don't just tell you about a character; they make you feel like you're in the room with them. They use a technique called "Show, Don't Tell." Today, you're going to learn that secret power!

### Our Mission Today:

We're going to learn how to turn bland, "telling" statements into exciting, "showing" descriptions. Your final mission will be to create your very own character and introduce them to the world in a way that truly brings them to life!

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## Body of the Lesson (30 minutes)

## Part 1: Understanding the Power (I Do)

Let's break down what "Show, Don't Tell" really means. "Telling" is like giving a fact report. "Showing" is like being a movie director for your reader's imagination.

- **TELLING:** The man was angry. (*This tells us an emotion, but it's flat.*)
- **SHOWING:** The man slammed his fist on the table, rattling the silverware. His face flushed red, and he glared across the room without blinking. (*This paints a picture! We see the actions and details that prove he's angry.*)

To "show," we use clues like:

- **Actions:** What is the character doing? (*tapping fingers, pacing, smiling*)
- **Dialogue:** What are they saying and how are they saying it? (*shouting, whispering, stuttering*)
- **Appearance:** What details stand out? (*wrinkled shirt, nervous eyes, a confident smile*)
- **Senses:** What does the character see, hear, smell, feel, or taste?

## Part 2: Practice Together (We Do)

Let's try a few together. I'll give you a "telling" sentence, and we'll brainstorm ways to "show" it instead. Let's use the whiteboard (or a large piece of paper) for our ideas.

1. **TELLING SENTENCE:** "*She was nervous.*"
  - **Let's brainstorm "showing" clues:** What does a nervous person do? (*Bites nails, fidgets, avoids eye contact, speaks quietly, stomach does flips.*)
  - **Our "Showing" Version:** She twisted the hem of her shirt into a knot and kept glancing at the door, her heart thumping against her ribs like a trapped bird.
2. **TELLING SENTENCE:** "*The pizza was delicious.*"
  - **Let's brainstorm "showing" clues:** How do you know it's delicious? (*Melty cheese stretching, steam rising, smell of garlic and basil, sound of the crunch, the taste!*)
  - **Our "Showing" Version:** Steam rose from the slice as I lifted it, and a long string of mozzarella stretched all the way back to the pan. The first bite was a perfect crunch of crust, savory tomato sauce, and salty pepperoni.

## Part 3: Your Turn to Be the Author (You Do)

Now it's your turn to wield this secret power! First, a quick warm-up.

### Activity 1: Sentence Challenge (10 mins)

Using **Handout 1: "Telling vs. Showing" Sentence Challenge**, rewrite the three "telling" sentences into more powerful "showing" sentences. You can do this!

(*Provide feedback and encouragement after the warm-up.*)

### Activity 2: Your Final Challenge - Create a Character (10 mins)

Now for the main event! Your mission is to introduce a brand new character. You can use an idea from **Handout 2: "Character Idea Spark"** or invent one completely from your imagination.

**Your Task:** Write one short paragraph (3-5 sentences) introducing your character. But here's the trick:

**don't just tell me about them, show me!** Instead of saying "She was clumsy," you could write, "As she walked into the room, she tripped over her own feet and sent a stack of books flying."

**Success Criteria:**

- The paragraph is 3-5 sentences long.
  - It introduces a character by showing, not telling.
  - It reveals a key personality trait, quirk, or flaw through the character's actions, words, or thoughts.
  - It creates a clear picture in the reader's mind.
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## Conclusion (5 minutes)

### Author Showcase & Recap

**Share:** Please read your character introduction aloud. It's time to meet your creation!

*(After sharing, provide specific, positive feedback.)*

- "I love how you showed he was thoughtful by having him stop to help the ant. I could really picture that."
- "The way you described her tapping her foot and checking her watch perfectly showed she was impatient without you ever having to say it!"

**Recap:** So, what is the big secret of "Show, Don't Tell"? Why is it a more powerful way to write?

**Takeaway:** You've learned one of the most important tools a writer has. By showing what your characters do, say, and think, you invite your reader directly into the world you've created. You don't just tell them a story; you make them live it. Great job today!

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### Differentiation

- **For Extra Support:** Provide a "Sensory Word Bank" with lists of interesting verbs and adjectives related to sight, sound, touch, and feelings. You can also start by describing a picture or a short video clip of a person to practice observing actions before writing.
  - **For an Extra Challenge:** After writing your paragraph, continue the story for two more paragraphs. Introduce a second character who is the complete opposite of your first character. Show their interaction through dialogue and action only.
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### Handout 1: "Telling vs. Showing" Sentence Challenge

**Instructions:** Rewrite each "telling" sentence below into a more interesting "showing" sentence or two. Use actions, senses, and details to paint a picture.

1. **Telling:** The boy was excited.

**Your Showing Version:** \_\_\_\_\_

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2. **Telling:** It was a very hot day.

**Your Showing Version:** \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Telling:** The old house was creepy.

**Your Showing Version:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Handout 2: "Character Idea Spark"

**Instructions:** Use one of these ideas to get started, or mix and match to create your own!

- A very shy girl who can talk to animals.
- A messy boy who is a genius inventor.
- A very organized and bossy space captain.
- A clumsy knight who is afraid of spiders.
- An overly confident wizard whose spells always go a little bit wrong.
- A girl who is always daydreaming and getting lost.