


**Exact, Descriptive Words**

Still another help for showing rather than merely telling the story is to use specific words instead of general ones. Use words that paint definite, concrete word pictures. Specific words help your reader to know exactly what is happening in the story. They add color and interest. Do not write *building* if *woodshed* or *two-car garage* would give the reader a better picture. Do not write *walk* if *trudge*, *hike*, or *stroll* would show the story better.

**Poor:** Too general


The animals in their pen had eaten all their food.

Nevin went into the room, picked something up, and went out to the van in a hurry.

**Better:** More specific

The rabbits in their hutch had eaten all their clover.

Nevin dashed into the kitchen, grabbed his books from the table, and hurried out to the school van.

**Merely tells:**

As Philip lay on the grass, he saw the clouds moving across the sky.


Nancy felt the cold coming through her coat.

**Shows descriptively:**


Philip lay on the warm grass. Above him large cumulus clouds floated across the sky.

Nancy shivered in the bitter cold, which crept through her thin coat.

In some cases you do not need to state the character's relationship to a scene. If the preceding sentences clarify what that relationship is, simply describe the scene. Compare the following examples.

**Weak:** Too much emphasis on character's relationship to the scene

Lowell parked his wheelchair before the large family room window. Suddenly he saw a large buck stepping out of the woods. He watched as it bounded across the narrow, rock-strewn meadow and leaped over the board fence.

**Better:** Proper emphasis on the scene itself

Lowell parked his wheelchair before the large family room window. Suddenly a large buck stepped out of the woods. It bounded across the narrow, rock-strewn meadow and leaped over the board fence.

