

Name: _____

Smiley-Face Tricks
By Mary Ellen Ledbetter

Writers use various techniques to develop their unique voices. Observe these techniques while reading, and incorporate them in your own writing.

1. MAGIC 3 - Three parallel groups of words, usually separated by commas, that create a poetic rhythm or add support for a point, especially when the items have their own modifiers. Make sure ALL verbs are in the same tense!

(Example)

In those woods, I spent hours LISTENING to the wind rustle the leaves, CLIMBING trees and spying on nesting birds, and GIVING the occasional wild growl to scare away any pink-flowered girls who might be riding their bikes too closely to my secret entrance.

Example: I was scared! My *palms* became sticky and wet, my *back* tingled with fear, and my *body* began to feel weak and cold.

2. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE - Non-literal comparisons - such as similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, symbolism, irony, alliteration, assonance, etc. add “spice” to writing and can help paint a more vivid picture for the reader.

Simile: a comparison using like or as; Metaphor: a comparison of two seemingly unlike things (not using like or as); Personification: giving human qualities to something inhuman; Hyperbole: using an exaggeration that is not totally true, but exaggerates the truth.

(Example)

The first week of **August hangs at the very top of summer**, the top of the live-long year, **like the highest seat of a Ferris wheel** when it pauses on its turning. The weeks that come before are only a **climb from balmy spring**, and those that follow drop to the chill of autumn, but the first week of **August is motionless**, and hot.

(Natalie Babbitt, Tuck Everlasting)

(Example)

She was *as embarrassed as a kid tripping* on the first day of school. She *nearly died* when *the desk walked* right in front of her.

3. SPECIFIC DETAILS FOR EFFECT - Instead of general, vague descriptions, specific sensory details help the reader visualize the person, place, thing, or idea. Can you shut your eyes and visualize?

(Example)

The crowd *chanted “Mary”* loudly as she *walked hesitantly* towards the spectators.

4. REPETITION FOR EFFECT - Writers often repeat specially chosen words or phrases to make a point, to stress certain ideas for the reader.

(Example)

The veranda is your only shelter AWAY FROM the sister in bed asleep, AWAY FROM the brother who plays in the tree house in the field, AWAY FROM your chores that await you.

(Example)

I hate writer's block! *I can't* think of anything to write. *I can't* come up with words for this stupid assignment. *I can't* create anything new. *I can't*, and so I won't!

5. HUMOR - Whenever possible and appropriate, inject a little humor to keep your reader awake. Making your writing funny can turn a boring paper into something colorful.

(Example)

Talking to my kid brother is **like talking to a wall**. It's pointless! No matter how hard I try, he still looks like I'm **speaking a foreign language**. He sits there, **picking his nose**, as if I'm not even there.

6. HYPHENATED MODIFIERS - When you connect two adjectives or adverbs together with a hyphen, it lends an air of originality and sophistication to your writing. Also, a noun, pronoun, verb, or adjective with a series of words "glued" together with hyphens.

(Example) The teacher shot the class an ***I-know-this-test-is-going-to-stump-you-all*** look, as she passed it out.

(Example)

She's got big green eyes that all guys admire and all girls envy, and this I'm-so-beautiful-and-I-know-it body, you know, like every other super model.

7. FULL-CIRCLE ENDING - When you include an image at the beginning of a piece of writing and then mention it again at the end, it gives your piece a sense of closure.

(Beginning)

I sit quietly on the old **wooden deck**, watching the **birds** soar through the humid air. The ocean's **waves** are like wrinkles gathered up in place.

(Ending)

The clouds are so delicate, so fragile, yet a single plane could not break their perfect form. I sit quietly on the old **wooden deck**, watching the **birds**, the **waves**, the clouds.

8. ADD AN APPOSITIVE - Appositives are descriptive phrases, set off by commas that modify a noun or noun phrase. Using appositives helps writers create sentences that are smoother and less choppy. Example:

- Jim Gold is a professional magician.
- Jim Gold performed at my sister's birthday party.

One way to combine these sentences is to turn the first sentence into an adjective clause:

- Jim Gold, **who is a professional magician**, performed at my sister's birthday party.