

Smiley-Face Tricks

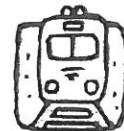
1. Magic 3 -- Three items in a series, separated by commas that create a poetic rhythm or add support for a point, especially when the items have their own modifiers.



"In those woods, I would spend 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 close to my secret entrance."
(Todd, college freshman)

2. Figurative Language--Nonliteral comparisons--such as similes, metaphors, and personification--add "spice" to writing and can help paint a more vivid picture for the reader.

"When we first moved into the house on Orchid Street, I didn't like it. My room was hot, cramped, and **stuffy as a train in the middle of the Sahara.** And the **looming skeleton-like gray and white frame** of the place scared me. I dared not imagine living there, but the backyard, oh, the backyard. It was a huge, long mass of plentifully growing trees and blackberries. Goodness, how I loved them." (Teri, grade 7)



3. Specific Details for Effect--Instead of general, vague descriptions, specific sensory details help the reader visualize the person, place, thing, or idea that you are describing.



"It's one of those experiences where you want to **call a radio station** and tell your problems to **some guy who calls himself Dr. Myke**, but who isn't more of a doctor than your pet hamster is, one of those experiences where you want to **read a sappy Harlequin novel** and **listen to Barry Manilow** with a box of bonbons as your best friend, one of those experiences where you wouldn't be surprised if someone came up to you and asked **exactly what time yesterday you were born**. Yeah, one of those." (Ileana)

"Remember the time I worked all day Saturday on an English paper? Sunday I accidentally left the only copy I had at your house. You politely handed it back to me the next day, first period, when it was due. But all over page one you'd drawn **zombies**; page two contained **detailed pictures of yet-to-be-discovered worms**; page three was **visited by various space aliens**; the fourth page **featured scenes from Australia and Florida**; and the last page was **covered with 'Mr. Jenkins is from the Stone Age,' 'English stinks,' and 'Mr. Jenkins is a four-eyed geek.'** Maybe that's why he gave me a D-." (Liz)



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



"The veranda is your only shelter **away from** the sister in bed asleep, **away from** the brother that plays in the treehouse in the field, **away from** your chores that await you." (Leslie)

5. Expanded Moment--Instead of "speeding" past a moment, writers often emphasize it by "expanding" the actions.



"But no, I had to go to school. And as I said before, I had to listen to my math teacher preach about numbers and letters and figures....I was tired of hearing her annoying voice lecture about 'a=b divided by x.' I glared at the small black hands on the clock, silently threatening them to go faster. But they didn't listen, and I caught myself wishing I were on white sand and looking down at almost transparent pale-blue water with Josh at my side....I don't belong in some dumb math class. I belong on the beach, where I can soak my feet in caressing water and let the wind wander its way through my chestnut-colored hair and sip Doctor Pepper all day long. I want to grip a straw all day, not a mechanical pencil that will try unsuccessfully to write the answers to unsolvable questions." (Shelly)

6. Humor--Professional writers know the value of laughter; even subtle humor can help turn a "boring" paper into one that can raise someone's spirits.

"He laughed? I'm nothing. I'm the rear end of nothing, and the devil himself smiled at me." (Andrew)



"And you--yes, you Justin!--were the guilty party who, after I took off my shoes to enjoy the hot pavement in early spring, put a frog in them. Of course, I didn't look at the shoes when I put them back on; it was the **squish** that gave your prank away." (Liz)

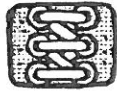
7. Hyphenated Modifiers--Sometimes a new way of saying something can make all the difference; hyphenated adjectives often cause the reader to "sit up and take notice."

"She's got this blonde hair, with dark highlights, parted in the middle, down past her shoulders, and straight as a preacher. 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." (Ileana)



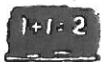
8. Full-Circle Ending--Sometimes students need a special ending, one that effectively "wraps up" the piece. One "trick" is to repeat a phrase from the beginning of the piece.

Beginning:



"Hey, you, with the green and neon-orange striped shoelaces, you who always pulled on my old frazzled white ones in math. Hey, you, who always added your versions of 'art' to my math problems for Mrs. Caton's class so that $9 \times 7 = 64$ turned out to be a train with puffs of smoke and two boxcars and made me get an 83 instead of a 93 since Mrs. C. doesn't count locomotives as correct answers."

Ending:



"Now Justin still sits behind me in math with his neon-green and orange striped shoelaces and pulls on my old white frazzled ones. He still draws zombies on my homework, but he hasn't dumped another pitcher of Kool-Aid on me--not yet at least. Oh, and by the way, in case you're wondering, his first words when he opened his eyes were, 'It was James Kenton who hid your clothes and made you walk around in a chicken suit...I'm not that mean.'" (Liz).

