



Module Four

Handout: Narrative writing techniques

When you are writing a narrative picture book, character and story are extremely important. So is language. Here are some tips:

- Get into the perspective of the character - step into their shoes. Only use **one perspective**.
 - Aim for under 500 words; less is more
 - Use the 3-act story structure: keep the intro short, dedicate most of the story to the journey, and keep the ending brief. Your style of language might reflect key moments in the story. For example, the climax might be fast-paced and the interlude is slow. Don't be afraid of silence and pauses.
 - Try writing into a 32-page layout:
 - *Page 4-5*
 - *Page 6-7*
 - *Page 8-7* etc. Use the page turn to your advantage.
 - The book is read aloud, so words can be more advanced. But always keep in mind appropriateness for the child as well as the rhythm and sound of the words.
 - Where possible, leave space for illustrations. Most of the written word will be **action**. Avoid descriptive phrases and adjectives. Challenge yourself: can this be said as an illustration? If so, remove it from the text.
 - Avoid feeling words, like happy, sad, scared etc. Use **show don't tell** instead (see next handout).
 - Use dialogue, but make dialogue relevant to story. Use **said** where possible instead of other speech directions like **yelled** or **explained**.
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