

# 7th Grade Tricks of the Writing Trade

Use these techniques wherever they may help you accomplish your goal in writing a specific piece this year.

---

"It's knowing what to do with things that counts."

--from Robert Frost's poem, "At Woodward's Gardens"

As an 8th grade writer, you already have a toolbox filled with tricks and techniques you learned last year! You'll have many opportunities to use these different tools now and throughout your writing life! This year, you'll learn to choose and use the techniques that work best to help you say what you really want to say, the way you want readers to hear it. Not every tool works for every purpose, right? (You wouldn't use a screwdriver when a hammer would easily do the trick, or use pliers to drill a hole!) Keep this handy, especially during the revision phase of your writing. Of course, we'll add new techniques to our writing toolbox as well!

## The Details

When? When you're narrating or describing.	Why? To help your reader closely understand, see, hear an important person, place, or event.
<u>Snapshot</u> (detailed physical description: what does it look like? sound like? feel like? ....)	
<u>Thoughtshot</u> (internal dialog, flashback, flash forward)	
<u>Expanded Moment</u> (a brief moment of action written in detail -- at least 1/2 page)	
<u>Specific Details for Effect</u> (using specific nouns and verbs; avoiding vague words like "dog," "got," "car.")	
<u>Methods of Characterization</u> (appearance, action, thoughts, environment, speech, what others say or think about him/her)	
<u>Full Circle Ending</u> (Words, phrases, ideas from the lead are repeated in the conclusion)	

# Figurative Language

**When?** When you're describing or making a special point.

**Why?** To use a unique voice to help your reader to see, understand, or hear something in a specific way. To add a particular tone or mood to that part of your piece.

Simile (describing something by comparing it to another unlike thing to make a point)

The moon looked **like** a ripe peach, **as** if I could pluck it from the sky.

Metaphor (a descriptive comparison, only **WITHOUT** using like or as)

The moon, a peach in the sky, was ripe for the picking.

Repetition for Effect (word or phrased is used 2 or more times to emphasize an idea or mood)

Alliteration (repetition of a consonant sound in word beginnings for effect)

The **s**nake **s**lithered **s**lowly over the **s**mooth **s**tones.

Onomatopoeia (word that sounds like its meaning) **BANG! POP! BUZZ!**

Personification (describing a non-human thing with **human** qualities)

The wind **whispered** through the trees, while the stars **winked in secret understanding**.

Hyperbole (exaggerating to make a point)

I was so startled, I **jumped a mile high**.

Idiom (a saying in a particular culture that has a meaning apart from the words)

It was **raining cats and dogs**, and we were so tired, we **hit the hay** by 8:00 pm.



# Crafting Sentences

**When?** Whenever they can more help you to write more exactly what you want to say!

**Why?** To add interest and variety to your sentences and structure.

Hyphenated Modifier (words joined together with hyphens to form one adjective)

My brother gave me the *l'm-going-to-get-you* look when I took his toy truck.



Magic 3 (series of three detailed verb phrases in one sentence)

At the beach, I spent hours sifting sand for sea glass, listening to gulls chatter, and floating on my blue raft.



Painting With Participles (an "ing" or "ed" word tagged on to the beginning of your sentence)

*Clawing* her way over the rocky ledge, she pulled herself up.

*Bruised and exhausted*, the climber reached the summit.



Painting With Absolutes (adds description by adding a 2-word "ing"-phrase BEFORE or AFTER a noun)

*Motor purring*, my cat kneaded her paws against the guitar.

The cat, *singing wildly, strumming the guitar*, dreams of being a rockstar.



# Crafting Sentences, continued

**When?** Whenever they can more help you to write more exactly what you want to say!

**Why?** To add interest and variety to your sentences and structure.

Painting With Appositives (renaming a noun with more information/description)

His locker, **a messy pigsty**, reeked of moldy socks.



Adjectives Out of Order (shift the adjectives so they go AFTER the noun)

The goalie, **strong and alert**, stopped the ball easily.



Active Voice (avoid overusing "to be" verbs like "is" "was" "are" "am" "were" by using specific verbs instead)

**Before:** I **am** a snowboarder who **is** anxious for winter!

**After:** As an enthusiastic snowboarder, I long for winter!

