



# SMILEY-FACE TRICKS



Give your reader something to smile about when they are reading your writing.  
The following are tips and tricks to use to make your writing awesome:

1. **BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS** - Having an effective beginning captures the reader's attention. Try to start with something exciting!

**Boring:** *"I woke up this morning,..."* (Great...didn't we all?)

**Better:** *"The crowd cheered as I scored the winning goal..."*

**Unique:** *"The toilet has arrived, its white pearl smiling back at me..."*

Effective writing needs a special ending, one that "wraps up" the piece. One trick is to repeat a phrase or detail from the beginning of the piece or to refer to something mentioned in the beginning.

**Beginning:** *"The last thing I saw before the truck came screeching to a halt mere inches from my face was her smug smile staring at me from where I was moments ago safely on the sidewalk."*

**Ending:** *"I looked over to see her face, but this time I was the one wearing the smug smile as I looked at her standing on the sidewalk."*

2. **DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE** – using descriptive language makes your writing better.

**Boring:** *"He was a man."*

**Better:** *"He was a tall, angry man."*

**Strong:** *"He was a towering, twenty-eight year old hockey player from Boston with a violent temper."*

3. **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND DEVICES** – using devices (such as similes, metaphors, onomatopoeia, personification, hyperbole, symbolism, etc.) helps you make comparisons and paint a more vivid picture for your writer.

*“The sun baked my bones and kissed my nose. I used to go to sleep under my mosquito net listening to the colorful hum of the crickets outside. Life was a kaleidoscope of sensual experiences. The air was hot and dry, wringing you out like a wet rag during the day, leaving the smell of sweat to linger into the cool and vegetative fragrance of the evenings.”*

- Sonja Todorovich

4. **SPECIFIC DETAILS FOR EFFECT** – instead of general, vague descriptions, include *specific* details. Using sensory details (sight, taste, touch, sound, smell) helps your reader visualize and experience your writing as they are reading it.

*“My soaking wet clothes suctioned to my skin as I pulled myself out of the lake. The smoke stung my eyes and tickled my throat. Around me on the shore, charred remains were strewn about.”*

5. **PARALLELISM (MAGIC THREE)** – Using parallel groups of words, in close proximity to one another, creates a poetic rhythm.

*“He was a strong man, a joyful father, and a hard worker.”*

*“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.”*

6. **EXPANDED MOMENT** – Instead of speeding past a moment, writers often emphasize it by expanding certain sections. Try to **show** your reader what is happening, instead of **telling** them.

**Don't tell:** *"I hate school and I wish I were at the beach instead."*

**SHOW!!!!!!:** *"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 in a bathing suit again, walking carelessly 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-coloured 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, grade 7)

7. **REPETITION FOR EFFECT** – writers often repeat specially chosen words or phrases to make a point or to stress certain ideas for the reader.

*"My bedroom is the only safe place, away from my parents' fighting, away from my angry brother, away from everyone who is mean to me."*

8. **HUMOUR** – Professional writers know the value of laughter, even subtle humour can help turn a boring piece of writing into one that can raise someone's spirits.

*I sat bolt upright.*

*"What was that? It sounded big."*

*"Everything sounds big in the woods."*

*This was true. Once a skunk had come plodding through our camp and it had sounded like a stegosaurus.*

*"Stephen," I whispered at his tent, "did you pack a knife? Have you got anything sharp at all?"*

*He thought for a moment. "Nail clippers."*

*"Anything a little more vicious than that?" Its eyes were three feet off the ground.*

*"Try shouting at it."*

*I cautiously shouted at it: "Hey! You there! Scat!"*

*"Oh, you brute, go away, do!" Katz shouted in merciless imitation.*

*"Please withdraw at once, you horrid creature."*

*"How can you be so calm?"*

*"What do you want me to do? You're hysterical enough for the both of us."*

*"I think I have a right to be a trifle alarmed, pardon me. I'm in the woods, in the middle of nowhere, in the dark, staring at a bear, with a guy who has nothing more to defend himself with than a pair of nail clippers. Let me ask you this. If it is a bear and it comes for you, what are you going to do—give it a pedicure?"* -Bill Bryson (A Walk in the Woods)

9. **HYPHENATED MODIFIERS** – a hyphenated modifier is when two or more words are connected by a hyphen and act as one adjective. Sometimes a new way of saying something can make all the difference, and hyphenated adjectives often cause the reader to sit up and take notice.

*“She’s got that 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, grade 7)

10. **USE STRONG VERBS** – using verbs that not only state the action one is doing, but how they are doing that thing is more effective.

**Boring:** *“Aman went down the street to catch the bus.”*

**Okay:** *“Aman ran down the street to catch the bus.”*

**Better:** *“Aman quickly ran down the street to catch the bus.”*

**Strong:** *“Aman sprinted down the street to catch the bus.”*

*“Mandy stirred the large pot of stew, watching as flashes of bright orange carrot and stark white potato danced around, occasionally peeking through the thick brown liquid as it bubbled and steamed. The stew had a strong, spicy scent, and when she took a taste, Mandy was immediately struck by the slap of red cayenne pepper, which reminded her of her grandmother’s kitchen. The stew, hot on her tongue, warmed her throat as it slid down. As she leaned forward, the steam made her face equally warm, and the soft sound of bubbles tickled her ears. It wouldn’t be long now until the dish was ready, and she knew that her stew would win the grand prize at the county fair.”*

11. **VARY SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND LENGTH** – varying the length of your sentences, as well as how they are structured, creates a nice flow to your writing. It keeps it from being repetitive, choppy, and monotonous.

*“This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It’s like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety.*

*Now listen.*

*I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony.*

*I use short sentences.*

*And I use sentences of medium length.*

*And sometimes, when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals-sounds that say listen to this, it is important.”* -(Gary Provost)