Show, Don’t Tell
How to add vivid details to your writing

**Background:** The Sensory/Descriptive domain of writing is that area, which deals with the vivid description and feeling the writer, uses in creating setting, characters, and action. Show, Not Tell is a technique developed by Rebekah Kaplan to help students write so that they are able to create a picture in the reader's mind, to get away from the repetition of such empty words as weird, really neat, beautiful, wonderful, and b-o-r-i-n-g.

**Examples**

**Telling:** The pizza was delicious.

**Showing:** Steam rising up off the melted cheese made my mouth water. The first bite, my teeth sinking into the cheese through the tomato sauce and into the moist crust, made me chew and swallow rapidly. Even the cheese and tomato sauce, sticking to my fingertips, begged to be licked.

**Telling:** The girls were excited.

**Showing:** Giggles and screams filled the arena. The soft curls were now damp with perspiration and the anticipation of the event. They held tight to each other in a mock effort to contain themselves. Arms flailed upward, and voices echoed in varying tones. The moment was here.

**Telling:** The room was vacant.

**Showing:** The door opened with a resounding echo that seemed to fill the house. Cob webs once attached flowed freely in the air as the open door brought light to a well worn floor. The light gave notice to the peeling paint on the walls and to the silhouettes once covered by pictures. The new air gave life to a stuffiness that entrapped the room. Faded and torn white sheets covered once new furniture now drowning in dust.

**Converting telling writing to showing writing: from sentences to paragraphs and beyond.** Choose TWO telling sentences from below and expand to a showing paragraph or other short genre of writing.

- I am nervous.
- It was a day unlike any other day.
- The story was exciting.
- The hamburger (taco, burrito, etc) was delicious. (any type of food).
- John/Mary is angry.
- The morning was beautiful.
- My room is a mess.
- The movie was filled with action.

Telling Sentence #1: __________________________________________________

**Showing Chart:** Create a Showing sentence to help use vivid details to show your reason about the topic in your chosen Telling Sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensory Image</th>
<th>Showing sentence</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sight</td>
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<td>Sound</td>
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<td>Smell</td>
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Write your Showing paragraph to create vivid details in your description about your Telling Sentence that you have chosen. (You will want to add all your sensory images/sentences that you did in the chart.)

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<th>Taste</th>
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Telling Sentence #2: ____________________________________________

Showing Chart: Create a Showing sentence to help use vivid details to show your reason about the topic in your chosen Telling Sentence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensory Image</th>
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