

“Telling” filters	
Thought	Wished/hoped
Think/thinking	Wondered
Realize/realized	Heard (could hear)/listened
Occur/Occurred	Seen/Saw (could see)
Wonder/wondered	Watched
Believe/Believed	Anticipated
Notice/Noticed/Noted	
Knew/Know	
Feel/feeling/felt	
Looked (he looked like he didn’t believe me)	
It is/it was	
It has been/had been	
There is/was/were	
There has been/had been	
It seemed	
Observed	
Decide/decided	
Obvious/clear	
Consider	
<p>Dialogue tags: Try to eliminate; put movement or other information in a separate sentence; avoid tags other than “said” or “asked” unless they convey the volume/tone of voice, such as “whispered,” “muttered,” “murmured,” “yelled,” but use those sparingly, and only when dialogue alone won’t convey the idea. Look for adverbs (“ly” words) in dialogue tags (such as “said angrily”) and get rid of them. Try modifying the dialogue or describing the body language instead.</p>	<p>Caused/Made:</p> <p>Telling: The garbage can fell over, causing him to spin on his heel, his heart pounding. Showing: The garbage can crashed to ground. Jack spun on his heel, his heart pounding.</p> <p>Telling: The smell made him sick. Showing: The rotten-egg stench roiled his stomach. He pressed a fist to his lips and prayed he wouldn’t hurl.</p>
<p>Passive voice that is telling rather than showing: “Brady was tormented by memories of the accident.”</p> <p>(Passive voice is completely appropriate in some situations, but watch for times when it’s being used to tell rather than show.)</p> <p>“Don’t say the Old Lady screamed. Bring her on and let her scream.” – Mark Twain</p>	<p>Felt/feel/feeling:</p> <p>Telling: She felt abandoned. Showing: Jack had vanished, not a trace of him left in the house. Like he’d never lived there. <i>You told me you’d love me forever, Jack. Did you mean it, even for a minute?</i></p>
<p>Words that name emotions (“anxiety” “fear” etc.): try not to name emotions but show them instead through body language, action, dialogue, visceral responses.</p>	<p>Knew/know:</p> <p>Telling: He knew she was going to scream. Showing: She was going to scream. OR: Her red face and clenched fists told him one thing: she was going to scream.</p>