

Help Box for B.

Possible **Primary Obstacles** of Characters

1. Marlin (*Finding Nemo*) -- Distance; sharks; jellyfish; Nemo is in fish tank
2. Mr. Incredible (*The Incredibles*) -- He is retired; various robots
3. Mike and Sully (*Monsters University*) -- They don't get along; Mike doesn't have scaring skills; Sully doesn't work hard
4. Merida (*Brave*) -- Tradition; Mor'du (the bad bear); they only have two days; father wants to kill bears
5. Carl (*Up*) -- Court orders him to move to retirement home; Charles Muntz; pack of dogs
6. Woody (*Toy Story*) -- Buzz is cooler; Sid likes to torture toys; moving van is leaving the next day
7. Woody and Buzz (*Toy Story III*) -- Sunny Acres is run by a dictator; the giant incinerator; Andy is growing up
8. Remy (*Ratatouille*) -- He's a rat
9. Mike and Sully (*Monsters Inc*) -- Child gets into their world
10. Flick (*A Bug's Life*) -- He is independent in an ant colony that wants uniformity; his only allies are circus bugs; grasshoppers are really large
11. Lightning (*Cars*) -- He must fix the road he tore up; he is distracted and falls into last place

## Lesson C. Scene Development: Creating Scene Descriptions

↔ C-1. Read the Original Animated Elephant Sample Story provided in Box C-1.

## Original Animated Elephant Sample Story

Edgar the elephant woke up to the warmth of bright sun on his closed eyelids. Lazily, he gathered his huge legs under him and rose up. He lumbered nonchalantly over to the nearby pool. After drinking, he waded into the deepest part of the pool and began splashing himself with water. The luxuriously cool water of the pool on his hot skin woke him up and made him hungry. So, he reached up to the tree hanging above him and began munching some leaves. The day was starting exactly how he loved it to begin.

Suddenly, he stopped eating, with leaves and branches hanging out of his mouth. He had heard something behind him. There it was again, an unmistakable crunching and chewing noise. Some other animal was stealing food from inside his zoo enclosure! With a trumpet of indignation, he turned and charged toward the direction of the sound. He expected to discover a monkey or some other sneaky creature. However, as he rounded the corner, to his surprise, he discovered another elephant!

Skidding to a halt, he drew himself up to his full height. Then, he spread out his ears and glared at the newcomer. The new, smaller elephant calmly gazed back at him, munching leaves. After several minutes, Edgar gruffly demanded to know the intruder's name and business. The trespasser, seeming confused, replied that he believed his name was Fred, but was not sure. As to his business, he did not know how or why he was in the enclosure. He explained that he had just woken up there and started eating.

"Well, don't eat my leaves," Edgar grumped. Then, with a harrumph, he stormed back to the tree at the pool's edge. Though he did not trust the newcomer, he wished to remain in the wonderfully cool water. There he continued his usual routine of eating and spraying water on himself periodically. Then, out of the corner of his eyes, he spotted Fred. To his horror, Fred was spraying trunk full after trunk full of water around the enclosure! If he kept up at this rate, he would waste all of the precious water. Frustrated, Edgar splashed over to Fred and began sternly lecturing him

When Edgar's speech was over, Fred was quiet and then asked a question. He mentioned that he thought the water replenished itself each day. Edgar sternly told him that was ridiculous, and Fred obediently stopped spraying water. Bitterly, Edgar refused to stand in the half-empty pool for the rest of the day. He was so consumed with himself that he didn't notice Fred staring at the leaves confusedly. Fred tried to remember what had happened with the leaves earlier in the day. He couldn't, so he decided to go ahead and eat again.

The next day, Edgar broke his routine and did not lumber to the pool immediately. Instead, concerned about whether Fred had eaten more leaves, he checked the trees. Angry, but not surprised to see some missing, he stomped over to the pool, where Fred was. He was about to scold the newcomer when he noticed the water level. The pool was back up to its normal level! Shocked, he shifted his gaze back and forth between the water and Fred. Finally, he bowed his head and began slowly spraying water from his trunk onto his back. Maybe Fred was not quite as dumb as he thought, and maybe he could share his resources.

## Two Gutters--Lack of Description and Over-Description

Descriptive writing is like bowling in that there are two gutters. The **first gutter is the lack of description**. This type of writing projects **no pictures into the imagination** of the reader.

The **second gutter is over-description**. This is when every aspect of the scene is described in too much detail. When this happens, the whole scene grinds to a stop while an entire paragraph is spent describing a chair, for example.

### Two Keys--Use Action and Be Picky

The **first key to avoiding either of these pitfalls is to describe using action as much as possible**. For example, instead of writing, *The spindly antique chair sat in the corner*, write, *The antique chair wobbled precariously as the man sat down*. By doing this, **you keep the scene moving while describing the things in the scene**.

You can be assured of having more action-driven descriptions if you **use action verbs as much as possible and avoid using being and linking verbs**.

For example, instead of saying, *The window pane was glossy*, say *The window pane glistened in the rain*.

You will avoid using being and linking verbs better if you learn to recognize this category of verbs by learning CI's BHL (Be a Helper, Link) verb song/rhyme.

<> **C-2**. Optional: Memorize the Be, a Helper, Link (BHL) verbs song (to the tune of the Alphabet Song):

### BHL Verb Song

ABCDEFGH

**Be, a Helper, Link verbs,**

HIJKLMN

**Is, Are, Am, Was, & Were.**

QRSTU

**Be, & Being, Been, Become,**

WXYZ

**Has, & Had, & Have are ones.**

Now I said my ABC's

**Can, Could, Shall, Should—they are fun**

Next time won't you sing with me?

**Will, Would, Do, Did, Does, & Done**

ABCDEFGH

**May, Might, Must—they are some as well,**

HIJKLMN

**Appear, Look, Seem, Remain, Taste, Feel, & Smell**

Box for C-2

The second key is to **be picky about what you spend time describing** and what you do not.

**The point of descriptive fictional writing is to put images into the mind of the reader and put emotions into his or her heart.** Some things need to be described in more detail than others.

<> **C-3.** Write a new sentence beneath each sentence given below, changing the description to action-verb-generated description rather than adjective-generated description.

**Hint: Go through the sentences and highlight all of the BHL verbs in them. Then consider if each of these can be removed/replaced.**

Example: He was woken up by the cold water.  
The cold water woke him up.

1. The new elephant was calmly gazing back at Edgar.

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2. He was expecting to discover a sneaky monkey.

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3. Edgar was splashing over to Fred.

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4. The pool was now half-empty.

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5. He was shifting his gaze back and forth between the water and Fred.

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6. There it was again, an unmistakable crunching and chewing noise.

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7. Fred was quiet and then asked a question.

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8. Edgar was beginning to munch some leaves.

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9. Fred was unable to remember what the problem was with eating leaves.

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10. Fred was explaining that he had just woken up in the enclosure.

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<> **C-4.** Choose five objects in the room you are sitting in right now. Write a sentence using action describing each one.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE

### Sample Action Descriptions for <> C-3

1. The new elephant calmly gazed back at Edgar.
2. He expected to discover a sneaky monkey.
3. Edgar splashed over to Fred.
4. Water now only filled half of the pool.

### Sample Action Descriptions for <> C-4

1. Edgar's lecture confused Fred, who thought the zookeepers refilled the pool every night.
2. Edgar loved each tree and branch in his enclosure.
3. Edgar thundered over to Fred, ready to explode in anger.

## Lesson D. Dialogue Writing: Quotation Review

You probably remember that a paragraph should have at least three sentences in order to be a paragraph, yet you have probably also noticed instances in which a paragraph only contained a sentence or two—or even just a word or two.

**Whenever you are using dialogue** (the written conversation of two or more people) **or whenever you are quoting people in your writing, begin a new paragraph each time the speaker changes.**

When you write dialogue, unlike other writing you do, you should focus on sentences more than paragraphs:

1. **Dialogue is comprised of sentences.**
2. The **paragraph breaks in dialogue are not there to show a unit of thought** like most paragraphs are.
3. The **paragraphs in dialogue are there to show when a new speaker speaks.**
4. **Plan for a new paragraph each time the speaker changes**, just like the sample did.

If you have ever written quotes in an essay or report, you probably remember the two first quote rules:

1. **Periods always go inside** closing quotation marks--never on the outside.
2. **Commas always go inside** closing quotation marks--never on the outside.

<> **D-1.** In the Dialogue Box provided (Box D-1), highlight the name of each person who is speaking.

**Dialogue Box**

“Who are you?” demanded Edgar. **(Paragraph 1)**

“I think my name is Fred, but I'm not sure,” the trespasser replied, looking confused. **(Paragraph 2)**

“Really?” **(Paragraph 3)**

“I'm sorry, but my memory is not the best.” **(Paragraph 4)**

Edgar rolled his eyes and retorted, "If you don't know your name, why don't you tell me why you are here then?" **(Paragraph 5)**

**Box D-1**

Did you find the following:

1. In **Paragraph 1**, the speaker is Edgar.
2. In **Paragraph 2**, the speaker is the trespasser (Fred).
3. In **Paragraph 3**, no name is given (though we know it is Edgar, don't we?).
4. In **Paragraph 4**, no speaker is given, but we know it is Fred.
5. In **Paragraph 5**, doubtful Edgar is talking.

**The words that tell who is speaking are called the speech tag.**

The speech tags in the paragraphs you studied above include the following:

- Paragraph 1: demanded Edgar.
- Paragraph 2: the trespasser replied, looking confused.
- Paragraph 5: Edgar rolled his eyes and retorted,

Do you see how the **speech tag tells who is speaking?**

Do you see how you can skip the speech tag sometimes if there are only two speakers--and you can clearly see who is talking?

You will be using dialogue soon!

To begin with, you should learn just a few dialogue rules:

1. **Each time the speaker changes, a new paragraph is started.**
  - a. This means that **the person switched.**
  - b. Do not change paragraphs if the same person is saying more than one sentence.
  - c. All of **one person's words at that given moment go in one paragraph** (until another person begins speaking).
  - d. When a different speaker talks, a new paragraph is started (even if the “new speaker” spoke earlier).



**2. When a speech tag comes at the beginning of the sentence, do the following:**

- a. **Start the speech tag with a capital letter** since it is the first word of your sentence.
- b. Put a comma after it, then begin your quote with a quotation mark-capital letter:  
Doubtful Edgar rolled his eyes and retorted, "If you don't know your name, why don't you tell me why you are here then?"

**3. When a speech tag comes at the end of the sentence (following the words that were spoken), do the following:**

- a. **If your quote is a statement, put a comma then quotation mark** at the end of it:  
"I think my name is Fred, but I'm not sure," the trespasser replied, looking confused.\*
- b. **If your quote is a question or exclamatory sentence, put that end mark (? !)** inside the quotation mark (since it is part of your sentence): "Who are you?" demanded Edgar.
- c. **Start the speech tag with a lower case letter** (since it is not a new sentence but part of the sentence you are now writing): demanded Edgar.

**\* Note: A sentence may only contain one period used as an end mark. Thus, when you have a beginning speech tag, follow it with a comma--not a period. The entire sentence will end with a period--one period as an end mark for the entire sentence.**

**<> D-2.** Rewrite four (**Extension:** six) of the quoted sentences from the Dialogue Box with speech tags in different positions with different wording, etc.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Extension-- \_\_\_\_\_

6. Extension-- \_\_\_\_\_

# Lesson E. Write On: Story Action

This week you will be writing a short story about an elephant.

There are some elements that your story should contain. We will look at last week's example to see some of those elements.

Stories are more than just an assortment of description. A story must, well, tell a story. While there are many types of stories, most, from mysteries to romances to action to an animal escaping from another, follow a similar pattern.

## Opening→*Calm*

Most stories begin with an opening. This is when the author gives background and introduces the characters. **In the sample story, this is when it describes** Edgar waking up, wading and splashing in the pool, and munching leaves.

The opening is when you can give lots of details that help the reader feel like they are really in your world. It should not be very long, however, since nothing exciting really happens.

## Inciting Incident→*Less Calm/Beginning Action*

The inciting incident is when the story really begins. It is when your character's world is turned upside down. In the sample story, this is when Edgar hears someone else eating in his enclosure.

## Progressive Complications→*Fast/Even Less Calm*

This step is the biggest difference between a short story like the example and a four hundred page novel. Long stories have lots and lots of complications while you will just have a few.

This is an important step though. If Edgar just accepts that someone else is in his enclosure and continues eating, it isn't much of a story.

The main character, the elephant, must face obstacles. **In the story example, those complications (or obstacles) are when Edgar discovers that the intruder is the elephant Fred and Edgar realizes that Fred is also wasting his water.**

When you are writing your own story this week, try to think of any things that could be obstacles for your elephant.

**Climax→Edge of Seat/No Calmness**

The climax is the last obstacle your main character will face. It is the moment of greatest danger. Obviously, **in the sample, this is when Edgar discovers the next morning that Fred has eaten even more leaves.** This moment should be more important and more dangerous than anything that has gone on before.

**Resolution→Calm Again/ Solution**

This is the end of the story after the climax. It is usually very short. In fact, **in the sample story, it is only a couple of sentences in length.**

<> **E-1.** What is the setting (the zoo, the forest, the plains, etc.)?

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<> **E-2.** What will you include in your opening? How will you set the stage for your story?

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<> **E-3.** What will be your inciting incident?

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<> **E-4.** What progressive complications will the main character have?

- a. What obstacles will make it harder for the main character?
- b. Choose at least three

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<> E-5. What will be the climax?

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<> E-6. How will your story be resolved?

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## Lesson F. Write On: SSS5

<> F. In the second paragraph of the passage, highlight the sentence *He had heard something behind him.*

Short sentences are probably the first type of sentences you learned to read and write. Many of you may have learned to read using a beginning reader containing sentences like *Matt sat.* As you learned more and more about writing, your sentences got longer and more complex. By the time you reach high school, the vast majority of the sentences you write should be longer and more complex than *Matt sat.*

But that doesn't mean you should never use short sentences. In fact, in Character Ink's Checklist Challenge, we often assign writers to include what we call SSS5 (Super Short Sentence of Five Words or Fewer).

**You don't want to just randomly have SSS5s anywhere in your story. You want to use them to make your story more interesting.** Using an SSS5 at the right time can add a lot of drama to your story. Here, we will show you how.

### Using SSS5 for Emphasis

**The first way to use an SSS5 is to emphasize something that is really important.** You don't use a highlighter to tell the reader what the important parts are, and you shouldn't use all capital letters in most types of writing.

Imagine you have ten Skittles. Nine of them are red and one is yellow. If you lay them on a table, which Skittle would stand out? Probably not any of the red ones. You would notice the yellow one first. It is different.

The same thing happens when you write. If most of your sentences are long and complex, then you have one that is super short, which sentence will stand out to the reader? You guessed it: the short one. It is different.

If you put the most important information in short sentences (and if most of your sentences are long and complex), you will emphasize whatever is in the SSS5.