



## Show vs. Tell Exercise

Adapted from Janice Hardy's [Understanding Show, Don't Tell](#)

Dear Author,

This is a simple exercise to help you hone your skill with showing rather than telling. Keep in mind that there are moments where telling is actually the better option, such as when you have already shown a scene and simply need one character to catch up another with the events that occurred. But most often, showing should be your go-to method to keep your reader firmly planted in the scene with your protagonist.

### Instructions

1. Print and cut out or recreate the two decks of cards on the following pages. Feel free add some ideas of your own as well.
2. For each round you work through, draw two cards—one from the Emotion Deck and one from the Person Deck. Interpret your cards as you see fit.
3. Using the cards you draw, write a scene without using the words on either of your cards. Your goal is to write a strong enough "showing" scene that others can understand from context who the character is and what they are feeling.
4. Ask a friend, family member, or fellow writer to read your scene and guess your Person and Emotion cards. If they get it, congratulations, you nailed it! If they don't, ask for feedback on what confused them or made them think otherwise and continue working to hone this element of your craft.

For more information, read my [Tips for writers](#) article titled [Stronger writing Through Show vs. Tell](#). I also recommend reading [Understanding Show, Don't Tell](#) by Janice Hardy.

Your editor,

*Mandi Summit*  
*Red Quill Editorial LLC*

*PS:* when you're ready for editing, [let's Discuss Your Manuscript](#) and secure your spot on Red Quill Editorial's calendar!



## Show vs. Tell Exercise

### Emotion Deck

Bored	Stressed	Tired	Apathetic	overwhelmed
Confused	Amazed	Excited	Shocked	Disillusioned
Eager	Frightened	Anxious	Insecure	Threatened
Insignificant	Helpless	Bitter	Furious	Frustrated
Humiliated	Betrayed	Disrespected	Jealous	Annoyed
Numb	Skeptical	Playful	Proud	Powerful
Peaceful	Optimistic	Joyful	Curious	Confident
valued	Courageous	Creative	Loving	Thankful
Inspired	Isolated	vulnerable	Ashamed	victimized
Abandoned	Grief	guilty	Remorseful	Disappointed
Judgmental	Horrified	Hesitant	Revolted	Depressed



## Person Deck

Hero	Mentor	Police officer	Caregiver	Comedian
Explorer	Teacher	Magician	Rebel	Chef
Ruler	Travel Agent	Lover	Trickster	Flight Attendant
Shapeshifter	Guardian	Ally	Cashier	orphan
warrior	Child	outlaw	Lawyer	writer
Engineer	Manager	Young Adult	Farmer	Intern
Doctor	Hair Stylist / Barber	Stay-at-Home Parent	wedding Planner	Hotel Concierge
Bank Teller	Teen	Beekeeper	Actor	Tattoo Artist
Dancer	Real Estate Agent	Masseuse	Librarian	Nurse
Nail Technician	Personal Trainer	Singer	Architect	Adult