

THE ART OF
Shorts



Finessing Your Words

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Each Word Matters

Choose each word with purpose, especially when writing short fiction. Specific over generic is a great start:

Happy -> Ecstatic
Walking -> Striding
Blue -> Cobalt

Sometimes, “boring” words are appropriate, or someone or something might grow from boring to interesting, or vice versa, in the eyes of your MC. You can show this by slowly changing the way they are described.

Immersive Atmosphere

From the first, your reader should be transported into a new world, whether it's a far-off planet or a local high school. Choose descriptors that fit with your setting. If space, choose spacey words. On a farm, country words. In the past, vintage words (vernacular). In the present, modern words (vernacular).

Create a Rhythm

Read your story aloud. Listen for:

Run-on sentences without pauses

Choppy/too similar sentences

Vary sentence structure - Don't start every sentence with "He/She/It/The..."

Ex. Varied Sentence Structure

Jake spotted Kirk across the gym. What did Susie see in the jerk...er, the jock? If she thought he was handsome, Jake didn't stand a chance with his crooked teeth and the scar on his chin from the infamous bicycle incident. He was just a humble nobody. Ugly and worthless.

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A Trick for Rhythm and Motion

"Rule of Three" Repetition: Use of same word, sentence structure, or synonyms/similarities for emphasis.

He was tired to the bone, chilled to the marrow, and wet, through and through.

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Example (w/ Word Count)

Looking over the ocean, he wondered

when she would come back. (11)

-becomes-

Gazing across the cresting waves, he
longed for her return. (10)

Gazing and longed are stronger, more emotional words.

Cresting waves is a prettier, more vivid image than ocean.