

Teaching Kids to Become "Crafters of Words"

Being a writer means being a "crafter of words". Kids need to experience the fun, creativity and pride of being a writer.

Anyone can write:

It is snowing outside today.

But how does one write:

Tiny flakes drifting by my window remind me it is still winter.

Or...

Duke beat UNC last night in basketball.

As the buzzer sounded, the Tarheels realized their chance for victory over the Blue Devils ended.

What is the difference between the two sentences? Which sentence grabs the reader's attention? Why does it grab attention? What sets it apart from most sentences?

The answer is "word crafting" or writing strategies.

Some common "word crafting" ideas:

1. Start a sentence with a verb or a phrase. Start with a question or an exclamation.
2. Take time to think of the perfect, unusual, vivid verb. The verb is often the heart of the sentence. The stronger the verb, the stronger the sentence.
3. Vary your sentences - keep some short, others long. Start each sentence with a different word. Use declarative, interrogative and exclamatory sentences.
4. Incorporate adjectives into sentences but in original ways. Use descriptive adjectives that help the reader form a visual picture in his head. Don't use worn out, predictable adjectives.
5. Skip the pronouns - try to use proper nouns instead.

Look at a couple of plain, boring sentences and use creative "word crafting" to improve each sentence.

For example:

1. My dog likes to eat dry food.

1st try - Scamper, my beagle puppy, gobbles his Kibbles 'n Bits every morning!

2nd try - Licking his bowl for the last crumb, Rex proves yet again how much he loves PuppyChow.

2. Sharks scare swimmers a lot.

1st try - Silently scouring the ocean for food, sharks appear dangerous to swimmers.

2nd try - Splashing through the waves, swimmers laugh and play while trying not to think of sharks around them.

Teaching kids to become "crafter of words" is challenging, time consuming and loads of fun. Don't give up. Work together. Write together and share ideas. Challenge each other!