

## Writing a short story



Linda was a student at London University, where she was studying law. Like many students she did not have much money because her grant was only just enough to live on. Last year, during the winter term, she decided to go back home to Scotland to spend Christmas with her family, but she couldn't afford a train ticket, and even the coach was too expensive, so she decided to hitchhike although her parents had always warned her against it. She persuaded her friend Amy to come with her, and phoned her mum to tell her she had invited a friend for the week. They caught a bus to the beginning of the motorway and waited. It was a cold, windy December day and while they were waiting, they got soaked to the skin. After waiting two

hours, they finally got a lift from the driver of an expensive black sedan, who was in fact going all the way to Edinburgh. The girls felt extremely relieved. The driver seemed a friendly fellow of around 35, reasonably well-dressed, and he and Linda talked a lot while Amy slept in the back seat. Suddenly, as they were driving along the motorway, a police car raced past them and made them stop. They were taken to the police station because the police suspected that the car had been stolen. A detective interrogated Linda and Amy for two hours, and she even had to spend the night in a cell. She was eventually released the next day. Apparently, the man had car-jacked the BMW a few minutes before he picked up the two friends. Linda and Amy swore that they would never hitchhike again.

### How to write a short story:

- Before you start writing your first draft, define the characters and draw the basic outline of the plot. You must have an idea of how to end your story before you start writing it.
- Write your first draft, then read it a first time and improve the content: describe the people, the landscapes, add linking words and use descriptive adjectives, avoiding weak vocabulary (for example avoid using 'very + adjective' - e.g. *very bad* - when another, stronger adjective can be found – *awful, horrible, ...*)
- Before copying your draft over, read it a last time to correct grammar and spelling mistakes. Be careful and coherent in your use of the tenses.

# 3 tips to cut clutter from writing

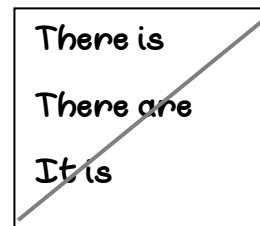
Clutter is words, phrases, or sentences that take up space but do no needed work; they contribute little, if anything, to the message of the piece.

Clutter is a common problem for anyone who writes but one that's easily solved by learning to recognize 3 of the most common symptoms of clutter:

## 1. Avoid using expletives

Expletive constructions are phrases such as:

- it is
- there is
- there are



Try to avoid using them, since these constructions merely obscure the main subject and action of a sentence.

## Examples

1) Expletive: *It was* her last argument *that* finally persuaded me.

Correction: Her last argument finally persuaded me.

2) Expletive: *There are* likely to be many researchers raising questions about *this* methodological approach.

Correction: Many researchers are likely to raise questions about this methodological approach.

3) Expletive: *It is* inevitable *that* oil prices will rise.

Correction: Oil prices will inevitably rise.

## 2. Avoid using qualifiers.

Qualifiers are adverbs that make distinctions in quality, quantity, or degree.

For example: *He was very tired*

“Very” explains to what degree he was tired. However, the distinctions made by qualifiers are usually either (a) unimportant or (b) made by using a more precise word without the qualifier. If a is true for the above sentence, “He was very tired,” write this instead: *He was tired*. If b is true, write this: *He was exhausted*.



## 3. Avoid overusing noun forms of verbs

Use **VERBS** when possible rather than noun forms known as nominalizations. Sentences with many nominalizations usually have forms of be as the main verbs. Using the action verbs disguised in nominalizations as the main verbs—instead of forms of be—can help to create engaging rather than dull prose.

*The function of this department is the collection of accounts.*

→ This department collects accounts.

*The current focus of the medical profession is disease prevention.*

→ The medical profession currently focuses on disease prevention.

## Descriptive words to improve your writing skills



Large	small
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• big</li> <li>• colossal</li> <li>• enormous</li> <li>• gigantic</li> <li>• huge</li> <li>• massive</li> <li>• substantial</li> <li>• significant</li> <li>• tremendous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diminutive</li> <li>• little</li> <li>• miniature</li> <li>• minute</li> <li>• petite</li> <li>• teeny</li> <li>• wee</li> <li>• slight</li> <li>• tiny</li> </ul>

Happy	Sad
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content</li> <li>• satisfied</li> <li>• blissful</li> <li>• joyful</li> <li>• delightful</li> <li>• ecstatic</li> <li>• thrilled</li> <li>• glad</li> <li>• pleased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• miserable</li> <li>• gloomy</li> <li>• dejected</li> <li>• depressed</li> <li>• disheartened</li> <li>• blue</li> <li>• unhappy</li> <li>• wretched</li> <li>• heartbroken</li> </ul>



Scary	Funny
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• haunting</li> <li>• terrifying</li> <li>• creepy</li> <li>• eerie</li> <li>• sinister</li> <li>• chilling</li> <li>• unnerving</li> <li>• ghostly</li> <li>• horrifying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comical</li> <li>• hilarious</li> <li>• entertaining</li> <li>• humorous</li> <li>• amusing</li> <li>• whimsical</li> <li>• witty</li> <li>• gleeful</li> <li>• laughable</li> </ul>

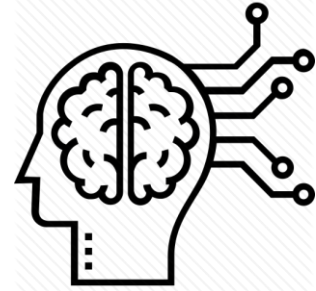
## laughed

snickered  
giggled  
roared  
chuckled  
chortled  
guffawed  
bellowed  
howled



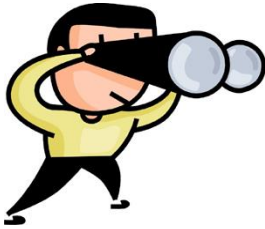
## intelligent

knowledgeable  
witty  
bright  
quick-witted  
ingenious  
sharp  
brainy  
clever  
smart



## saw

glimpsed  
noticed  
gazed at  
stared at  
observed  
spotted  
glanced at  
spied  
examined  
watched



## fast

quick  
speedy  
accelerated  
swift  
brisk  
nimble  
agile



## pretty

beautiful  
lovely  
glamorous  
attractive  
elegant  
cute  
gorgeous  
stunning  
alluring  
striking  
fair



## like

love  
admire  
appreciate  
fancy  
adore  
idolize  
prefer  
cherish  
enjoy  
care for

