



# Smiley Face Tricks



- 1. MAGIC THREE:** Three items in a series, separated by commas that create a poetic rhythm or add support for a point, especially when the items have their own modifiers.  
“In those woods, I would spend hours <sup>1</sup>**listening** to the wind rustle the leaves, <sup>2</sup>**climbing** the trees and spying on nesting birds, and <sup>3</sup>**giving** the occasional wild growl to scare away any pink-flowered girls who might be riding their bikes too close to my secret entrance.” (*Todd, college freshman*)
- 2. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:** Non-literal comparisons add “spice” to writing and can help paint a more vivid picture for the reader. Include examples of similes, metaphors, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, personification, symbolism, irony, alliteration, assonance, etc.  
“When we first moved into the house on Orchid Street, I didn’t like it. My room was hot, cramped, and **stuffy as a train in the middle of the Sahara**. And the **looming skeleton-like gray and white frame** of the place scared me.” (*Teri, grade 7*)
- 3. SPECIFIC DETAILS FOR EFFECT:** Add vivid and specific information to your writing to clarify and create word pictures. Use sensory details to help the reader visualize the person, place, thing, or idea that you are describing.  
“It’s one of those experiences where you want to **call a radio station** and tell your problems to **some guy who calls himself Dr. Myke**, but how isn’t more of a doctor than your pet hamster is, one of those experiences where you want to **read a sappy Harlequin novel** and **listen to Barry Manilow** with a box of bonbons as your best friends, one of those experiences where you wouldn’t be surprised if someone came up to you and asked **exactly what time yesterday you were born**. Yeah, one of those.” (*Lena*)
- 4. REPETITION FOR EFFECT:** Repeat a symbol, sentence starter, important word, etc. to underline its importance.  
The veranda is your way only shelter **away from** the sister in bed asleep, **away from** the brother that plays in the tree house in the field, **away from** your chores that await you.” (*Leslie*)
- 5. EXPANDED MOMENT:** Take a moment that you would ordinarily speed past, and develop it fully to make your reader take notice.  
“But no, I had to go to school. And as I said before, I had to listen to my math teacher preach about numbers and letters and figures...I was tired of hearing her annoying voice lecture about ‘a=b divided by x.’ I glared at the small black hands on the clock, silently threatening them to go faster. But they didn’t listen, I caught myself wishing I were on white sand and looking down at almost transparent pale-blue water with Josh at my side...I don’t belong in some dumb math class. I belong on the beach, where I can soak my feet in caressing water and let the wind wander its way through my chestnut-colored hair and sip Dr. Pepper all day long.” (*Shelly*)
- 6. HUMOR:** Whenever possible and appropriate, inject a little humor to keep your reader awake.  
“He laughed? I’m nothing. I’m the rear end of nothing, and the devil himself smiled at me.” (*Andrew*)
- 7. HYPHENATED MODIFIERS:** When you connect two adjectives or adverbs together with a hyphen, it lends an air of originality and sophistication to your writing.  
She’s got this blond hair, with dark highlights, parted in the middle, down past her shoulders, and straight as a preacher. She’s got big green eyes that all guys admire and all girls envy, and this I’m-so-beautiful-and-I-know-it body, you know, like every other super model.” (*Lena*)
- 8. FULL-CIRCLE ENDING:** When you include an image or phrase at the beginning of a piece of writing and then mention it again at the end, it gives your piece a sense of closure.  
*Beginning:*  
“Hey you, with the **green and neon-orange striped shoelaces, you who always pulled my old frazzled white one in math**. Hey you, who always added your **versions of ‘art’ to my math problems** for Mrs. Caton’s class so that  $9 \times 7 = 64$  turned out to be a train with Puffs of smoke and two boxcars and made me get an 83 instead of a 93 since Mrs. C. doesn’t count locomotives as correct answers.”  
*Ending:*  
“Now Justin still sits behind me in **math with his neon-green and orange striped shoelaces and pulls on my old white frazzled ones**. He still **draws zombies on my homework**, but he hasn’t dumped another pitcher of Kool-Aid on me - - not yet at least. Oh, and by the way, in case you’re wondering, his first words when he opened his eyes were, ‘It was James Kenton who hid your clothes and made you walk around in a chicken suit...I’m not that mean.’” (*Liz*)