

CHARACTER CREATION

I'm sure you've been told at school that when you're writing you should 'show not tell'. With this activity we're going to build a character, but in a different way to usual. Instead of starting with name, age, gender, and hair colour, we'll be thinking about showing what our character is like through some details that are often missed in a basic character profile.

Remember- there are no right or wrong answers here. Your character doesn't exist yet, so nothing you suggest could possibly be incorrect! It's also absolutely fine to change your mind about your character halfway through; writers change their minds all the time. If they didn't we'd all be stuck with some pretty terrible ideas!

Let's start with the eyes. Write down a few sentences about your character's eyes. Challenge yourself to avoid obvious 'telling' comments such as, 'Her eyes are blue,' and instead opt for more interesting details. Are their eyes menacing, kindly, or cloudy? Are they creased, bruised or artfully made-up? Do they have deep-set eyes, a glinting eyebrow piercing, or a constant twitch? Perhaps they have x-ray vision, or they're blind? There's so much that you can show about a character by describing just one feature, without having to tell them 'This character is old,' or 'He has been in a fight.'

Next, using the same 'show don't tell' technique think about your character's walk. Do they shuffle or strut, limp or stomp furiously? Are they a wheelchair-user, a stumbling and falling, or trying carefully to balance in towering heels? Do they always run, or wear rollerblades, or hobble on battered bare feet? Write a few sentences about how your character moves around.

Now write a few sentences about your character's voice. How do they speak? Is their voice booming, or whispered? Hoarse or smooth? Are they always shouting or terribly shy? Do they have an accent, or perhaps a combination of accents that shows where they have lived?



I'd like you to think about their hands now. Are they beautifully manicured, or are the nails bitten and peeling? Is the skin loose and crepey, or covered in blue rivers of veins? Are the knuckles bruised or fake-tan stained? Write a few sentences about the hands of your character.

What are your character's ambitions in life? Are they aiming for world-domination, hoping to win the annual hot-dog eating competition or dreaming of discovering the cure for Coronavirus? Write a few sentences about what your character would like to do in the future.

What are they afraid of? Write a few sentences about your character's fears. Are they terrified of dogs, or water or the colour orange? Do they worry about being caught by the police, or about an alien invasion?

You've developed a wonderfully detailed character now, without stating all of the obvious details about them. Now that you know them well, I'd like you to draw what you imagine them to look like and, importantly, give them a name. If you're struggling to think of the perfect name, this website gives you a list of the most popular names by decade (eg. the most popular names in the 1930s) <https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/decades/> or for modern characters or sci-fi you can try combining the names of two of your friends, eg. Matt and Kari could become Mari, Katt, Karti, Makar etc.

Now that you've crafted this brilliant character, you must feel that you know them well enough to put them in a situation and know how they'd react. I'd like you to write a story featuring your character (decide which historical period your character's story will be set in and in which location), or a diary entry from their point of view. It's your writing, so your story can be about anything you like and in any setting, but must feature your character.

If you're inspired... Why not create their family, or think about these questions: where does your character go on holiday? What is their favourite meal? Who is their best friend? Does your character have a pet? What is in the picture frame on their bedside table?

I'd love to see your wonderful writing! Ask an adult to send me a picture of your work to info@writesparks.co.uk or [@writesparks](https://www.instagram.com/writesparks) on Instagram!



EXAMPLES

