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IF YOU'VE EVER WONDERED WHAT  
ADD MORE DETAILS MEANS,  
THIS GUIDE IS FOR YOU!

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# MRS. TOM'S GUIDE TO ADDING DETAILS TO YOUR WRITING

*HINT: IT'S MORE THAN ADDING AN ADJECTIVE!*



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What it Means to Add More Details - 1 to 2

Types of Details - 3

Definitions and Examples - 4 to 9

Your Personal Detail Collection - 10 to 17

Details Love Complex Sentences - 18

One Last Detail - 19





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What does it mean to add more details to writing?

Often, writers add one or two new adjectives (describing words) and that's it.

Nothing wrong with that if you're a novice writer. Adding new words that describe more of your topic counts as adding details. However, it's just one tiny part of the adding details process.

When you learn how to add a variety of different kinds of details, writing soars!

Think about it this way. The best baseball pitchers have a variety of pitches. They don't just throw fastballs. They've got sliders, screwballs, and curve balls.

That makes for an exciting baseball game--just like writing with a range of details leads to dynamic writing!

Let's get to it.



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On the following pages you'll see a quick reference list of detail types. Then, we'll take a deeper dive with definitions and examples for each kind of detail.

In every piece of writing, you want a variety of detail types that fit the kind of writing you're creating.

You don't need every type of detail in every piece. That would be like wearing twenty necklaces when your outfit only needs three to look fabulous.

Also, you want to pick the right kind of detail for the piece you're writing. For example, in a story about the time you ate five pieces of your grandma's famous apple pie, you probably won't have numbers or data (unless you include the calories--and that wouldn't be any fun at all).

On the following pages, you'll see examples of common detail types selected from E.B. White's Charlotte's Web. I picked this book because most of us have read it or at least know the story. Plus, in my estimation, it's nearly perfect!

Finally, you'll see some examples that can be more than one detail type. That's awesome. It means the writing is working overtime to express amazing ideas.



## Quick Reference List of Details

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Use a range of different types.

Go Small

Description

Thoughts

Dialogue

Action

Micro-Story

Comparison

Humor

List

What it's NOT

Opinion/Commentary

Quote

Definition

Numbers/Data

Steps/Instructions

Domain Specific Terms

Timeline



## Detail Definitions and Examples

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### Go Small

### Example from Charlotte's Web

If you're trying to describe an idea, place, person, or object that's BIG, zoom in on one small part. Use NOUNS and VERBS to describe it. Often, going small with ONE focused detail shows MORE.

She loved to stroke him, to feed him, to put him to bed. Every morning, as soon as she got up, she warmed his milk, tied his bib on, and held the bottle for him. (p. 8)

### Description

Write sentences that appeal to the senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell). This also includes adjectives, but adjectives tell instead of show. Remember the showing power of nouns and verbs.

The barn was very large. It was very old. It smelled of hay and it smelled of manure. It smelled of the perspiration of tired horses and the wonderful sweet breath of patient cows. (p. 13)

### Thoughts

Let us inside your head, or the mind of a person you're writing about. Make the invisible visible with sentences about thoughts.

He wished Fern were there to take him in her arms and comfort him.(p. 22)



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## Dialogue

### Example from Charlotte's Web

<p>Include conversations. Use quotation marks.</p>	<p>"Where's Papa going with that ax?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast. (p. 1)</p>
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## Action

<p>Show action with verbs. Action can be big or small.</p>	<p>Tears rolled down her cheeks and she took hold of the ax and tried to pull it out of her father's hands. (p. 3)</p>
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## Micro-Story

<p>With a few sentences, tell a tiny story that shows a detail about your topic.</p>	<p>I had a beautiful cousin who managed to build her web across a small stream. One day a tiny fish leaped into the air and got tangled in her web... (p. 102)</p>
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## Comparison

### Example from Charlotte's Web

<p>Compare different things. Often, these are similes. LIKE or AS are clues it's a simile.</p>	<p>Everything on the farm was dripping wet. The grass looked like a magic carpet. The asparagus patch looked like a silver forest. (p. 77)</p>
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## Humor

<p>Be funny! Write a one-liner. Crack a joke.</p>	<p>(Charlotte talking about killing flies so she can eat them.) I always give them an anesthetic so they won't feel pain. It's a little service I throw in. (p. 48)</p>
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## List

<p>This can be a numbered list, or you can write a long sentence using commas to separate each item in the list.</p>	<p>Charlotte is fierce, scheming, blood-thirsty--everything I don't like. (p. 41)</p>
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## What It's NOT

## Example from Charlotte's Web

<p>Use any type of detail to describe what something is NOT.</p>	<p>The rat had no morals, no conscience, no scruples, no consideration, no decency, no milk of rodent kindness, no compunctions, no higher feeling, no friendliness, no anything. (p. 46)</p>
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## Opinion/Commentary

<p>Let the reader know your opinion about the writing topic. This is often subjective since your reader may agree or disagree with your opinion.</p>	<p>He said that the words on the spider's web proved that human beings must always be on the watch for the coming of wonders. (p. 85)</p>
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## Quote

<p>Use another writer's words as a detail for your writing. Always put a quote in quotation marks and give credit to your source.</p>	<p>E. B. White believed that "a writer who waits for ideal conditions under which to work will die without putting a word to paper."</p>
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## Definition

## Example from Charlotte's Web

<p>This type of detail reads like a dictionary or vocabulary definition.</p>	<p>Magnum opus is Latin and means great work. (p. 145)</p>
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## Timeline

<p>List of dates and/or times. It might be in the form of a table or graph. This often shows up in writing about historical events or sequences of events (like stages of metamorphosis).</p>	<p>His plans for the day went something like this: Breakfast at six-thirty... From seven to eight, Wilbur planned to have a talk with Templeton... From eight to nine, Wilbur planned to take a nap outdoors in the sun... (p. 25-26)</p>
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## Numbers/Data/Statistics

<p>Use numbers. This type of detail is more common in scientific writing.</p>	<p>There is no place like home, Wilbur thought, as he placed Charlotte's five hundred and fourteen unborn children carefully in the safe corner. (p. 172)</p>
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## Steps/Instructions

## Example from Charlotte's Web

<p>This is helpful when you're showing a sequence of events or how to do something.</p>	<p>First, I dive at him. Next, I wrap him up. Now, I knock him out, so he'll be more comfortable. (p. 37 and 38)</p>
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## Domain Specific Terms

<p>Niche topics have words that are unique to the subject. For example, if you're writing about spiders, you might include applicable scientific terms.</p>	<p>My legs are hairy for good reason...Furthermore, each leg of mine has seven sections--the coxa, the trochanter, the femur, the patella, the tibia, the metatarsus, and the tarsus. (p. 55)</p>
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And there you have it. Definitions and examples of the most common types of details. E.B. White knew how to use a variety of details. He didn't just stick to one type. That's one of the reasons he writes so well. You can do it, too.



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Now, it's your turn to find examples of detail types that grab your attention. The best way to do this is by reading! Whenever a sentence catches your eye, ask yourself, "What kind of detail is this?"

Then, see if you can copy the structure of the detail in your own writing. The sentences that you collect are patterns for writing.

For example, here is the LIST example from Charlotte's Web:

"Charlotte is fierce, scheming, blood-thirsty-- everything I don't like."

This is so good. I can add this to my personal detail collection and try to imitate it in my own writing. For example, I could write the following about my precious dog, Maddie:

Maddie is affectionate, loyal, and optimistic-- everything I love about people and pets!



## My Detail Collection

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### Go Small

Example From:	Example From:
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### Description

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

### Thoughts

Example From:	Example From:
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## My Detail Collection

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### Dialogue

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

### Action

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

### Micro-Story

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------



## Comparison

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

## Humor

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

## List

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------



## My Detail Collection

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### What It's NOT

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

### Opinion/Commentary

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

### Quote

Example From:	Example From:
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## My Detail Collection

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### Definition

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

### Timeline

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

### Numbers/Data/Statistics

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------



# My Detail Collection

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## Steps/Instructions

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

## Domain Specific Terms

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

I Found a New Type of Detail: \_\_\_\_\_

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------



## My Detail Collection

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I Found a New Type of Detail: \_\_\_\_\_

Example From:	Example From:
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I Found a New Type of Detail: \_\_\_\_\_

Example From:	Example From:
---------------	---------------

I Found a New Type of Detail: \_\_\_\_\_

Example From:	Example From:
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Using a variety of details means you need to write complex sentences. There are LOADS of ways to write complex sentences--and that's way too much to teach you in this short and sweet guide--but the one thing you need to keep in mind is this:

### MAKE FRIENDS WITH COMMAS!

Commas are like keys that unlock a jail cell. They OPEN up space in simple sentences so you can add more details. Let me show you what I mean.

Here's a simple sentence: I love Maddie.

I want to tell you she's fluffy and playful, but there's no room in the sentence! Alternatively, I could do this:

Because she's always ready to play fetch, I love my fluffy Maddie!

You can collect comma sentences, too! Copy the structure of cool sentences you find in your reading and insert your own words. It's a good way to begin your lifelong friendship with commas.



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Remember these big ideas:

- When you read, collect examples of amazing detail and comma sentences so you always have a writing teacher by your side.
- Use a variety of detail types.
- Use sentences that need commas so there's room for your amazing ideas!

Always writing,

*Lorrie*

