

8 Ways of Adding **Pzazz** to Your Writing

For an **A*** at GCSE

Boring task:

“Describe the room you are in”

8 ways of writing an interesting answer:

1 Start with descriptive detail:

sight / sound / smell / texture

eg: “That low humming is likely to drive me to insanity before the time is up. It’s the whining background noise of some dodgy old radiator, I think”

2 Use eye-catching similes/metaphors

eg: “Just ten minutes ago we shuffled quietly into this huge echoey sports hall like nervy contestants about to face Simon Cowell. Now I feel like some battery-farmed chicken scrunched into my little space and begging to be rescued by Jamie Oliver.”

3 Use vivid but not over-the-top vocabulary:

eg: insanity, whining, nervy, scrunched ...

4 Play around with point-of-view:

I / you / he / she / we / they ...

eg: “You’d have thought they might have finished painting the ceiling. That’s the first impression as you look around this oversized green barn ...”

5 Use sentence variety (short & long)

Make long sentences by using -ing and -ed verbs, connectives like “although” and “as”, and relative clauses with parenthetical commas.

In other words, make your sentences as interesting and unexpected as your vocabulary.

eg: “Here I am. Sitting in a large and echoing sports hall, stuck out on the edge of the school’s sprawling site, I have 90 minutes to prove myself. No pressure then. Although I’ve always been told I was good at English, this is my first real test. Am I?”

- 6 Start some sentences with a phrase:**
eg: "A few minutes ago ... / In the last few days ... / Under the desk I'm sitting at there is ..."
- 7 Use a mix of statements, questions, dialogue, statistics, quotations:**
eg: "Who, exactly, decided to paint this place green? It's not, after all, just any shade of green: it's a vivid, sick-making, unignorable green. It's a green that's not exactly the colour of nature, but I guess that seems appropriate because what all 250 of us are being asked to do – write about the room we're in – doesn't feel entirely natural either."
- 8 Show that you understand how punctuation works:**
Use semi-colons to separate phrases to replace the word "and" in long sentences; use colons to point ahead like car headlamps; use parenthetical comas to create islands of words
eg: "A large space; a dull background hum; a sense of nervousness; a vivid green backdrop: yes, the English exam is under way. Here I am, candidate number 1356, and off we go."

In other words, be quirky, be interesting, be unpredictable, be accurate ... and enjoy!

Geoff Barton
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