

# 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**  
**May 2010**