


Where are we going with this?

<p>01 Types of voice What are they?</p>	<p>02 Character voice What is it? Where does it come from? How is it expressed?</p>	<p>03 But how? How and where to add voice to your manuscript</p>
<p>04 Examples ...examples.</p>		<p>06 Exercises Now you try!</p>

Voice is ineffable. But it's easy to see, usually in the first paragraph. —[Andy Ross](#)





Author voice vs. Narrator voice vs. character voice

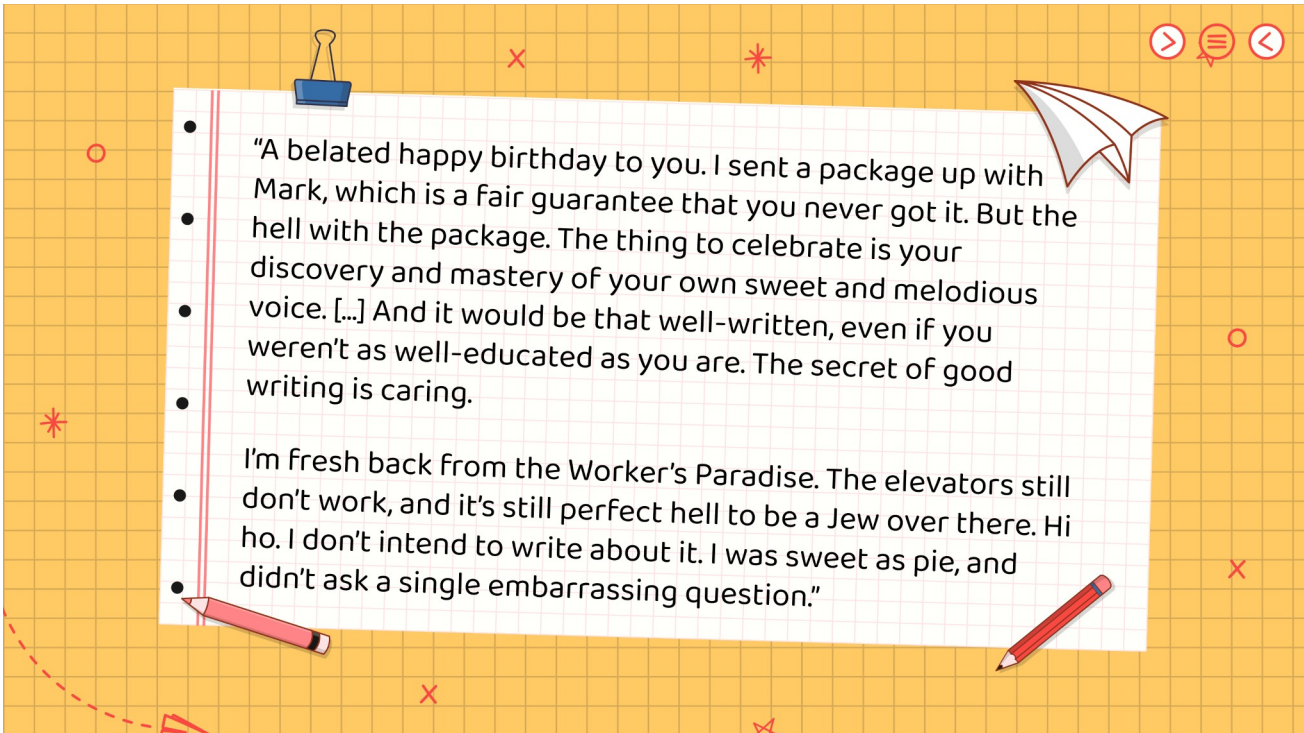
01 **Author voice**

I'm not a trend-chaser so I'm most drawn to a pitch and submission when the writer shows confidence in their voice and has a clear intention in their choices of plot and structure. —[Jessica Craig](#)

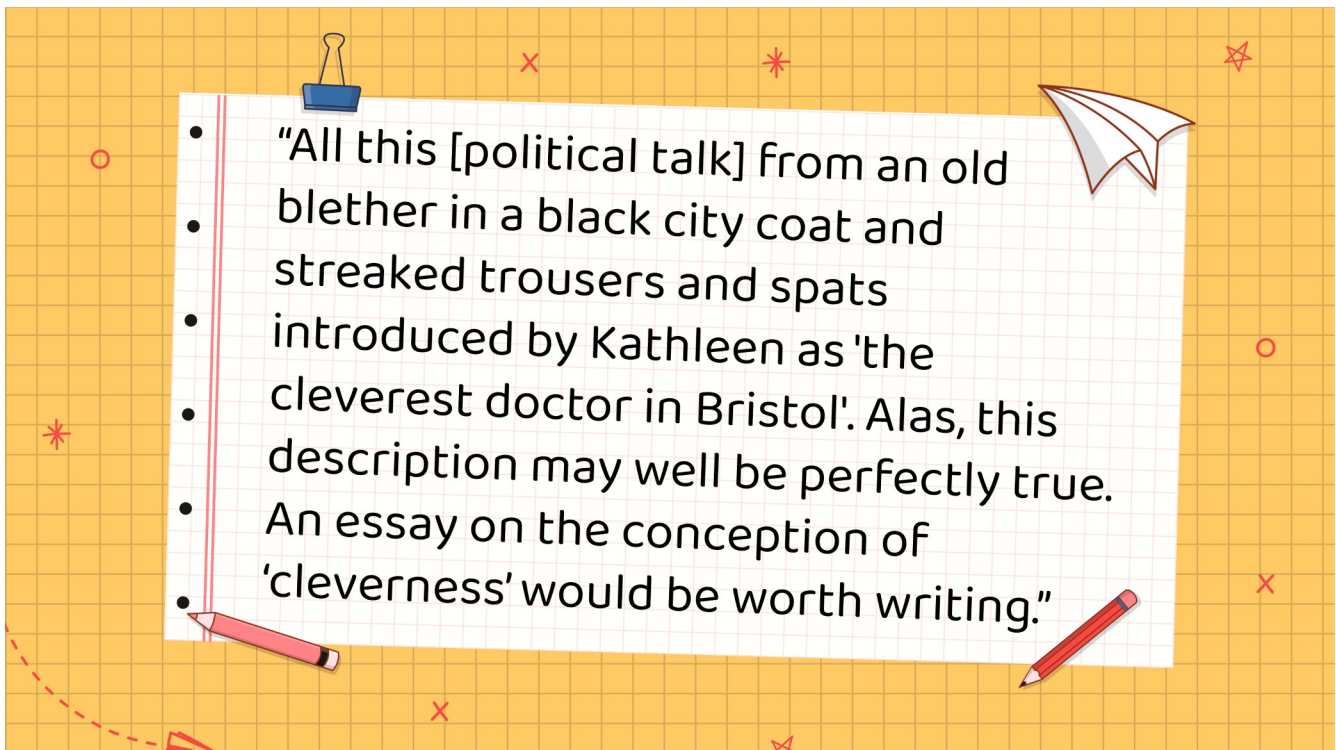
I'm looking for clients for a career, not just this book, and voice is the thing that makes me confident I'll love every book you write, no matter what happens with this one. —[Sharon Pelletier](#)

What does this excerpt from an author's letter (not part of a novel) tell you about them? Can you guess who they are?



- "A belated happy birthday to you. I sent a package up with Mark, which is a fair guarantee that you never got it. But the hell with the package. The thing to celebrate is your discovery and mastery of your own sweet and melodious voice. [...] And it would be that well-written, even if you weren't as well-educated as you are. The secret of good writing is caring.
- I'm fresh back from the Worker's Paradise. The elevators still don't work, and it's still perfect hell to be a Jew over there. Hi ho. I don't intend to write about it. I was sweet as pie, and didn't ask a single embarrassing question."



- "All this [political talk] from an old blether in a black city coat and streaked trousers and spats introduced by Kathleen as 'the cleverest doctor in Bristol'. Alas, this description may well be perfectly true. An essay on the conception of 'cleverness' would be worth writing."

(Kurt Vonnegut, C. S. Lewis)

Author voice vs. Narrator voice vs. character

voice

Narrator voice

02

If I can't immediately picture where (and when) we are and hear a clear, authentic voice speaking to me while I'm reading, I'm not likely to read very much.

—[Noah Ballard](#)

To be honest, I don't read [query letters] first; I always look to the writing and the voice. It takes me less time—I can read five words to a paragraph and guess at whether I may end up offering representation.

—[Weronika Janczuk](#)



Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the Western Spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small unregarded yellow sun.

Orbiting this at a distance of roughly ninety-eight million miles is an utterly insignificant little blue-green planet whose ape-descended life forms are so amazingly primitive that they still think digital watches are a pretty neat idea.


This planet has—or rather had—a problem, which was this: most of the people living on it were unhappy for pretty much of the time. Many solutions were suggested for this problem, but most of these were largely concerned with the movements of small green pieces of paper, which is odd because on the whole it wasn't the small green pieces of paper that were unhappy.

And so the problem remained; lots of the people were mean, and most of them were miserable, even the ones with digital watches.

Reasons "voice" can be hard to grasp:

1. There are (at least) three types of voice in a novel
 - a. Character Voice should not be the same as Author voice
 - b. Character Voice can be Narrator Voice
2. Voice doesn't exist independently
 - a. Other aspects of characterization
 - b. world/worldbuilding
 - c. It's a whole vibe

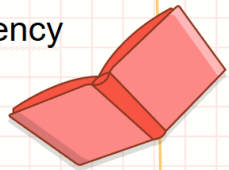





Where does character voice come from?

- Location
 - World, Country, Region, State, Town, Neighborhood
 - Climate, air quality, biome
- Sports Team
- Family
 - ● Place in family
- Education, Class, Socioeconomic status
- Hobbies, interested
- Occupation
- Fandoms *
- Religion

- Trauma/Privilege
- Ambitions, Goals
- Biases, Values, Disabilities, Special abilities/Talents, Neurodivergency



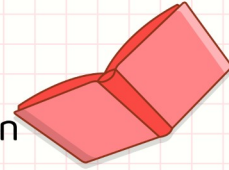
The above is all backstory, can be sprinkled in throughout the novel



How is character voice expressed?

Over ~_(ツ)_/~ % of communication is non-verbal. *

- Appearance
 - Clothing, alterations, personalization, symbols, jewelry, accessories, hair, body mod/tat/pierce
- ● Mannerisms
 - Nervous habits, use of body in conversation
- Behaviour
 - × How they enter, exist in, and exit a conversation *

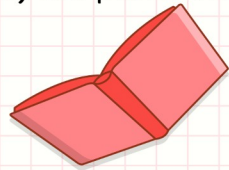




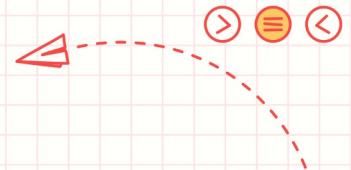
How is character voice expressed?



- Words
 - Dialect, slang, sentence structure, word choice, metaphor, verbosity, sarcasm
- Thoughts
 - What they choose not to say, what they say vs what they mean/think,
 - Reasoning or justification for decisions or actions
 - Degree of self-awareness of flawed logic or how they are perceived
 - What do they notice?
 - Emotional lens
 - How much mood affects the word choices, how much emotion put into speech



How is character voice expressed?



Beware of

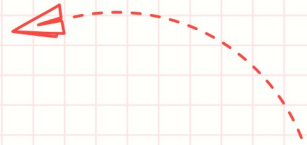
- Caricature (don't overload)
- Stereotype
- Spelling out accents



- ah ain' goin dayun thur
- I ain't going down there, no how.

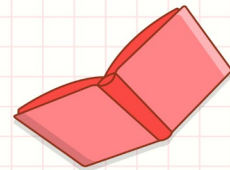


How is character voice shown on the page?



POV considerations

- 1st v 3rd v omniscient
- ● distance



Example of voice doing lots of character work from *Big Little Lies*, Liane Moriarty

- That doesn't sound like a school trivia night," said Mrs. Patty Ponder to Marie Antoinette. "That sounds like a riot."
- The cat didn't respond. She was dozing on the couch and found school trivia nights to be trivial.
- "Not interested, eh? Let them eat cake! Is that what you're thinking? They do eat a lot of cake, don't they? All those cake stalls. Goodness me. Although I don't think any of the mothers ever actually eat them. They're all so sleek and skinny, aren't they? Like you."
- Marie Antoinette sneered at the compliment. The "let them eat cake" thing had grown old a long time ago, and she'd recently heard one of Mrs. Ponder's grandchildren say it was meant to be "let them eat brioche" and also that Marie Antoinette never said it in the first place.

Excerpt from a novel with most of the voice removed. Where do you see opportunities for voice?

- “I like this time of year. I’m glad it exists. The tree branches make me feel happy. I will use them to decorate my room.
- “I don’t approve of that idea. The boughs are messy. Your room is already cluttered with objects from outside, and decorating a bedroom is unnecessary, because their purpose is simply for sleeping.”
- “I enjoy decoration in my room, because I feel a decorated space makes for better dreams. I will put these boughs in a container on my table.
- “Don’t make a mess as you do so.”

Excerpt with voice added back in.

- “I’m so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers. It would be terrible if we just skipped from September to November, wouldn’t it? Look at these maple branches. Don’t they give you a thrill—several thrills? I’m going to decorate my room with them.”
- “Messy things,” [...] “You clutter up your room entirely too much with out-of-doors stuff. Bedrooms were made to sleep in.”
- “Oh, and dream in too. And you know one can dream so much better in a room where there are pretty things. I’m going to put these boughs in the old blue jug and set them on my table.”
- “Mind you don’t drop leaves all over the stairs then.”

Anne of Green Gables

Excerpt with voice stripped out

- I see that I am naked and connected to many tubes. There's one in each arm, one in each leg, one in my urethra, and two underneath me. I think one might be inserted into my rectum. That seems bad. I observe that I also have many electrodes placed all over my body, but they're only on my skin and not penetrating.
- [...]
- Only three tubes remain: an IV in my arm, a rectal tube, and a catheter. Those latter two are the tubes I most wanted removed. I test my arms. They feel very heavy.

Excerpt with voice added back in

- I look down at my body. I'm naked and connected to more tubes than I can count. There's one in each arm, one in each leg, one in my "gentlemen's equipment," and two that disappear under my thigh. I'm guessing one of them is up where the sun doesn't shine. That can't be good. Also, I'm covered with electrodes. The sensor-type stickers like for an EKG, but they're all over the place. Well, at least they're only on my skin instead of jammed into me.
- [...]
- Only three tubes remain: an IV in my arm, a tube up my butt, and a catheter. Those latter two are kind of the signature items I wanted removed, but okay. I raise my right arm and let it fall back to the bed. I do the same for my left. They feel heavy as heck.

Project Hail Mary, Andy Wier

Rewrite the passage below from the perspective of a character from your work-in-progress, a book, movie, or show you love, or a character you just invented or would like to experiment with. Try to have the character express voice in several ways (reference the slides on where voice comes from and how it is expressed on the page for inspiration).

• ✨ **Now you try!** ✨

• ✕ I started walking soon after I woke up, which was

• quite early in the morning. It was cold. My muscles ○

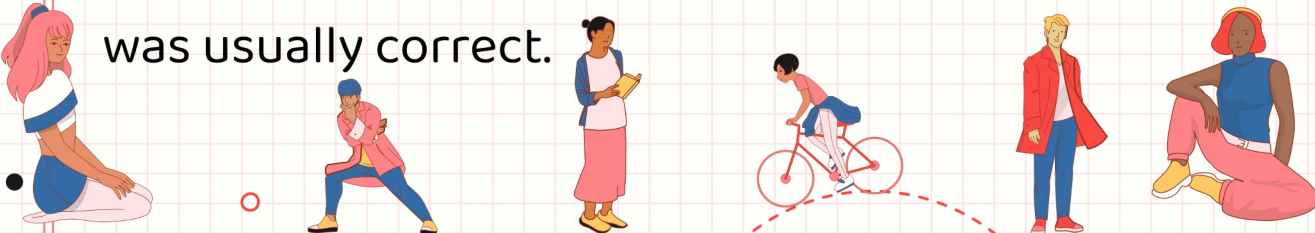
• didn't feel rested. However, I had to reach the

• compound today, so I couldn't waste time. I

• thought the compound might not even exist, but

• my friend thought it was the best option, and she

• was usually correct.



Thank you!



HELLO

FROM THE OTHER SIDE

[SkipperBooks.com/](https://SkipperBooks.com/PikesPeak)
PikesPeak

**creative Guests
spill the tea!**

Weekly guests share funny, embarrassing, or
awkward stories + nuggets of wisdom



TarynDoingItAllWrong.Substack.com