

First Chapter Cognitive tricks A

1. Getting the reader's attention

RED: use extraordinary language to describe something ordinary

Bob rose at the defiant squawk of his belligerent timepiece.

GREEN: use ordinary language to describe something extraordinary

The first aliens landed at about tea time.

BLUE: Say there is nothing unusual going on. Labor the point.

It was at ordinary day. The sun rose at the appointed hour. The alarm rang as usual.

ORANGE: Say there is something unusual going on when there clearly isn't.

For Bob to wake at six-thirty, have breakfast by seven, and leave the house at seven-fifteen was a break from his usual routine.

THE POINT IS: Anything with an indefinable wrongness seizes the attention, forces the question: "what's going on here?"

2. Keeping the reader's attention

YELLOW: Overwhelm the reader with possibilities

Maybe it was a trick of the light; maybe it was malice; maybe it was that dodgy kebab; maybe it was the unseasonable weather, or that busybody neighbor, or maybe Alice was right, and Bob was losing his mind.

PINK: Allude to something important then talk about something else for as long as you can

She put her foot down. At last, Alice was getting away. It looked like it would be a nice day, and she decided to head out to the woods. There were a lot of things you could do on a day like this.

WHITE: lavishly, or adequately, describe minor details, but for the important stuff, drip feed

As the white Mercedes SLS AMG GT sped on custom tires down the winding, hot corniche, the driver's white gloved hands occasionally caught the sunlight.

Braking jerkily in spite of the high-perf carbon pads, the car came to a halt in a narrow gravel patch that overlooked the gleaming city and the gleaming sea. The driver's boots crunched across to the precipitous drop, the gull-wing hissing shut in the background.

THE POINT IS: Chapter 1 is about arousing the reader. Fill the reader's imagination with questions and possibilities, and keep the facts for later.

First Chapter Cognitive tricks C

3. Some rules to break good and hard – but only in chapter 1.

PUCE: Show don't tell – nope. Tell as much as you like. Mix showing and telling.

GANGRENE: Don't break the fourth wall – nope. Address the reader directly. By name if possible.

LIBERACE: Avoid hyperbole and exoticism – nope. But be careful, there is such a thing as too much glitter.

THE POINT IS: Chapter 1 is not like other chapters. In the other chapters you're merely telling the story. In chapter 1 you're *starting* it. That's different. So it needs to be different.

If you liked this...

You are going to love: [How to Create Story Hooks](#)

The best way to get a **sale** is to ensure that the **first page** of your book makes people **want to read** the whole story – so whether they use Amazon's "Look Inside" or open a print-and-paper copy, anyone who sees that first page is Hooked.

