

# Vague ↗ Detailed

The Four Ingredients of Good Writing. Flavor isn't just for Food.

# Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat.

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oKbs4jAf7M&ab\\_channel=Netflix](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oKbs4jAf7M&ab_channel=Netflix)





# The Prompt

The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a *challenge, setback, or failure*. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

# Bland

- There was this one time when I tried out for a music competition and didn't get it. I had practiced a lot at home because my mom insisted I do well. So I went in and sat down. The instructor gave me my cue to start and I got really nervous, shut down and couldn't do it. He said I could try again, so I did, and although I made a bunch of mistakes and it was far from perfect, I played the song. What I learned from this is that even if you panic at first, you need to try again. My second attempt was not perfect, but deciding to try again was what made me proud of myself, and gave me confidence that I could do something. Now I can say I did it.

Where are you?

No idea what instrument you play...

Wait, when?

Why'd you want to try out?

Duh.

What song? #\$\$%&!

Nobody cares anymore.

SHOW > TELL.



# Add some salt:

- ~~There was this one time when~~ I tried out for a music competition and **failed** ~~spectacularly~~ **didn't get it.** I had practiced **the clarinet** ~~a lot~~ **every** ~~afternoon after school for 2 hours~~ **because my mom insisted I do well.** So I went in **to the school auditorium** and sat down. The instructor gave me my cue to start and ~~I got really nervous~~ **my jaw clenched up and my hands started sweating.** I shut-down and couldn't do it. He said I could try again, so I did, and although ~~I made a bunch of mistakes~~ **I honked and squelched at times** ~~it was far from perfect,~~ I played ~~the song~~ **Swan Lake.** What I learned from this is that even if you panic at first, you need ~~to try again~~ **to center yourself, breathe, and focus.** My second attempt was not perfect, but deciding to try again was what made me proud of myself, and gave me confidence that I could do something. Now I can say I did it.

Concrete detail: auditorium

Concrete detail: Clarinet

Sensory Detail: Provides tangible cue

Another concrete detail

Sensory Detail again.

## So what did we add? → Concrete/Sensory Detail

- I tried out for a music competition and **failed spectacularly**. I had practiced **the clarinet every afternoon after school for 2 hours**. So I went in **to the cavernous school auditorium** and sat down. The instructor gave me my cue to start and **my jaw clenched up and my hands started sweating**. I shut down and couldn't do it. He said I could try again, so I did, and although **I honked and squelched at times** I played **Swan Lake**. What I learned from this is that even if you panic at first, you need **to center yourself, breathe, and focus**. My second attempt was not perfect, but deciding to try again was what made me proud of myself, and gave me confidence that I could do something. Now I can say I did it.



# Let's add some fat:

- I tried out for a music competition and **failed spectacularly** **like a star going super nova**. I had practiced **the clarinet every afternoon after school for 2 hours**. ~~So~~ **Taking my fate into my own hands**, I went in **to the school auditorium** and sat down. The instructor gave me my cue to start and **my jaw clenched up and my hands started sweating**. I shut down and couldn't do it. He said I could try again, so I did, and although **I honked and squelched at times** I played **Swan Lake** -- **miraculously**. **You really do reap what you sow**, and what I learned from this is that even if you panic at first, you need **to center yourself, breathe, and focus**. My second attempt was not perfect, but deciding to try again was what made me proud of myself, and gave me confidence that I could ~~do it~~ **break the surface again after having seemingly sunk into the abyss**. Now I can say I **fought through panic and survived**.

simile

Hyperbole

metaphor

hyperbole

metaphor

idiom

# So what did we add? → Idiom / Figurative Language

- I tried out for a music competition and failed spectacularly, **like a star going super nova**. I had practiced the clarinet every afternoon after school for 2 hours. **Taking my fate into my own hands**, I went in to the school auditorium and sat down. The instructor gave me my cue to start and my jaw clenched up and my hands started sweating. I shut down and couldn't do it. He said I could try again, so I did, and although I honked and squelched at times I played Swan Lake -- **miraculously**. **You really do reap what you sow**, and what I learned from this is that even if you panic at first, you need to center yourself, breathe, and focus. My second attempt was not perfect, but deciding to try again was what made me proud of myself, and gave me confidence that I could **break the surface again after having seemingly sunk into the abyss**. Now I can say I **fought through panic and survived**.

# Let's add some acid:

Participial Phrase

- Driven by my love of classical music, I tried out for a music competition and failed spectacularly, like a star going super nova. I had practiced the clarinet every afternoon after school for 2 hours. Taking my fate into my own hands, I went in to the school auditorium and sat down. The instructor gave me my cue to start and my jaw clenched up and my hands started sweating and I shut down – my jaw clenching tightly and my hands sweating. I shut down and couldn't do it. He said I could try again, so I did, and although I honked and squelched at times honking and squelching through my unique version of I played Swan Lake – miraculously. You really do reap what you sow, and what I learned from this is that -- even if you panic at first, you need to center yourself, breathe, and focus. My second attempt was not perfect, but deciding to try again was what made me proud of myself, and gave me confidence that I could break the surface again after having seemingly sunk into the abyss. Now I can say I fought through panic and survived.

Absolute phrase

Participial phrase

## So what did we add? → Advanced Phrases

- Driven by my love of classical music, I tried out for a music competition and failed spectacularly, like a star going super nova. I had practiced the clarinet every afternoon after school for 2 hours. Taking my fate into my own hands, I went in to the school auditorium and sat down. The instructor gave me my cue to start and I shut down – my jaw clenching tightly and my hands sweating. He said I could try again, so I did, honking and squelching through my unique version of Swan Lake -- miraculously. You really do reap what you sow, and I learned from this -- even if you panic at first, you need to center yourself, breathe, and focus. My second attempt was not perfect, but deciding to try again was what made me proud of myself, and gave me confidence that I could break the surface again after having seemingly sunk into the abyss. Now I can say I fought through panic and survived.

# Let's add some heat:

- Driven by my love of classical music, I tried out for a music competition and failed spectacularly, like a star going super nova. I had practiced the clarinet every afternoon after school for 2 hours. Taking my fate into my own hands, I ~~went~~ marched into the school auditorium and sat down. The instructor ~~gave~~ handed me my cue to start and I shut down – my jaw clenching tightly and my hands sweating. He said I could try again, so I did, honking and squelching through my unique version of Swan Lake -- miraculously. You really do reap what you sow, and I learned from this -- even if you panic at first, you need to center yourself, breathe, and focus. My second attempt ~~was not~~ fell short of perfect, but ~~deciding~~ choosing to try again was what made me proud of myself, and gave me confidence that I could break the surface again after having seemingly sunk into the abyss. Now I can say I ~~fought through~~ defeated panic and survived.

Went = blah

gave = boring

Change all "was/is" if you can...

Total domination...

Shows agency

## So what did we add? → Action Verbs

- Driven by my love of classical music, I tried out for a music competition and failed spectacularly, like a star going super nova. I had practiced the clarinet every afternoon after school for 2 hours. Taking my fate into my own hands, I **marched** into the school auditorium and sat down. The instructor **handed** me my cue to start and I shut down – my jaw clenching tightly and my hands sweating. He said I could try again, so I did, honking and squelching through my unique version of Swan Lake -- miraculously. You really do reap what you sow, and I learned from this -- even if you panic at first, you need to center yourself, breathe, and focus. My second attempt **fell short of** perfect, but **choosing** to try again was what made me proud of myself, and gave me confidence that I could break the surface again after having seemingly sunk into the abyss. Now I can say I **defeated** panic and survived.







