

Character tags

A tag word or action tag can make even a character that has a small part in your story stand out or be recognized when needed. With a main character, it can show a little personality, a hint of tension, or just make them seem more human.

In one of my stories (set in the 1800's) I have a heroine who always says "hell's bells" when she is angry. It's her way of cursing. No one else in the story says this, so if the reader sees that tag in a sentence, they know who is talking without a doubt. You could also have a character that has a habit of calling everyone honey. Or a character that talks with slang, uses bad English, an accent, or whatever fits that character and seems normal for him or her.

Action tags work the same way. I for one, have this habit of playing with my hair, twisting strands of it around my finger. I notice I do this a lot more if I am nervous, or even bored. I could have a character in a story who has a slight limp, or the habit of jiggling loose change in his pocket, sucking on a piece of hard candy, or maybe drumming his fingers on his desk.