

**Tip #13. The Nike Principle: Just do it!**

This tip is aimed more at the writer who is new to the game, although experienced writers also slip on this banana peel. It's a tip that's close to my heart for the simple reason that it's an easy fix with a big payoff. A 'one-swipe' polish that brings instant shine. It comes up frequently in the writing I critique and invariably invokes a 'lightbulb' moment when explained to the owner of the work in front of me.

It works like this: "Don't have your character go to do something. Just have them do it!"

Here are a few examples.

1. He went to stand up. His feet ached as he hobbled to the phone.  
There's no need for him to go to stand up. This doesn't add anything. We know he eventually ended up on his feet because he hobbles toward the phone. Rather: "He stood up. His feet ached as he hobbled..."
2. Dave noticed a door at the furthest end of the building. After steadying himself, he began to walk in that direction. He reached the door and blah blah blah...  
What purpose to have Dave "begin to walk"? Have him "walked in that direction" instead.
3. Her automatic reaction was to pinch her arm, expecting to feel nothing, but when she felt shooting pain she knew she wasn't dead, yet.  
Rather cut to the chase: "She pinched her arm, expecting to feel ..."
4. Her body started to shudder, her lips began to quiver and the next thing he knew she was howling like she'd lost her pet poodle to the tyre of a dump truck  
Again better to simply write: "Her body shuddered, her lips quivered..."
5. They started to head home. Only once they were through the forest did whispered conversation return.  
Why did they only 'start to' head home? Rather: "They headed home. Only once..."

From the above it should be clear that unless a character is interrupted in the middle of doing something, and therefore prevented from completing the action, or, before they can actually get to the action, there is no need for them to "go to" do it. Just have them act. We gain nothing by adding these preliminary words. In most cases they simply take up space and slow down the pace.