

Character Tagging

Character tagging is a method used to identify a character that does not have a name. It can also be a nickname or an alias for a main character or a supporting character.

When there are multiple characters with no names, this method is useful. This helps the reader keep track of who is doing the talking, acting, or thinking. Character tagging can add a description and help the reader get a better visual.

Many times, character tagging can add drama, tension, suspense, or even humor to the scene.

A few character tag name examples:

Baldy	a clean-shaved and baldheaded character
Bug Eyes	a character that has large bulging eyes
Dimples	a character with dimples
Pimples	a character with a severe case of acne
Scarface	a character with a large scar across the cheek
Shorty	a short character
Smiley	a character that smiles a lot
Twinkles	a character with beady or flashing eyes
Whiskers	a male character with the five o'clock shadow

Picture this:

Ex-Army Ranger Sam Cruz is the character in focus. He is hiding from bad guys and sneaks into an alley thinking he is safe.

Example:

Cruz stepped into the dark alley. Up ahead, something in the darkness moved. Three figures emerged.

Shit!

They were waiting for him. What now? Run or fight? But he wasn't used to running and wasn't about to start now.

The three figures took a step forward. The one on the left was a short man, almost a midget, and he had a three-foot piece of chain draped over his shoulders. In the middle, the tall, slim guy tossed a Bowie knife from one hand to the other. And the one on the right was a fat dude with a baseball bat.

Here they come.

Shorty stepped forward, twirling the chain like a miniature version of Bruce Lee. Slim followed, doing figure eights with the blade. And Fatty did a few practice swings.

Showtime.

Cruz planted his feet, relaxed his shoulders, and brought up his hands.

These three characters appear only once in the story, so there is no need to give them real names. Using

character tags avoids naming them and helps enhance this scene.

Picture this:

Susan is the character in focus. She is chatting with friends and is looking for someone to hook up with.

Example:

Susan stopped talking. A soldier in Class A uniform, complete with ribbons and medals, stepped into the reception hall.

She smiled and ignored her friends. The handsome soldier wasn't wearing a wedding ring. Yes. She undid one button on her blouse, made her move, and swayed her hips straight for Medals.

In this scene, Susan doesn't know the name of the soldier but calls him Medals.

Picture this:

John is the character in focus. He is an undercover cop looking to infiltrate the cartel.

Example:

John stopped sipping his drink.

Lucia Guzmán Benavides entered the restaurant, the drug lord's oldest daughter. He'd seen her before

and heard all the stories. She was in her mid-thirties, with long black silky hair, slim, and with all the curves in the right places. She moved with grace. Her hips swayed just right. Not too much and not too little. Her full lips and captivating eyes would melt an iceberg.

John heard all the people who knew her and kept their distance. They called her the Black Widow but never to her face.

In this scene, I introduce the character Lucia to the story and give her a tag/nickname. Going forward in the story, this character is called by her name or the Black Widow.

In Summary:

Not every character mentioned in a story needs a name. If the character is not part of the plot, it is better to use a description. (The mailman, the cop, the bad guy, the nurse, the stranger, etc.)

But sometimes character tagging will enhance the drama, tension, suspense, or humor of the scene. Use your judgment.