

POLISH LIKE A PRO: HOT TIPS

BREAK UP WITH YOUR MANUSCRIPT

Put your manuscript down for as long as you can stand it. In the meantime, write something new to help you establish the story you're trying to tell.

GOAL MOTIVATION AND CONFLICT

Check your goal, motivation and conflict. Is your protagonist actively working toward their goal?

INDEX CARD PLOTTING

Write out each scene on an index card and include the POV, the first and last sentence, the main action that occurs in the scene, if there's any kissing, and out of 10, how would you rate the conflict?

Plot the conflict on a graph so you can check you're hitting those key points (10%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 90%).

With all the scenes that score a 5 or less ask yourself if your scene is slow ... or if it is stagnant?

Can you foreshadow any of the conflict or action in later scenes in the book earlier in the story?

QUESTION & ANSWER TECHNIQUE

Have you asked any questions early in your story that the reader will keep turning the pages for? Can you increase your sense of pace by ensuring those burning questions linger in the reader's mind?

VOICE

Have you established genre by using a strong sense of voice from the first page of your manuscript? If you're stuck, try journaling!

LOCATION

Have you established location within the first page of each scene?

Have you used the right amount of words for the genre?

If you moved the location somewhere else, would the story be stronger?

Can you change where you place location in your scene to impact the pacing?

CHARACTERS

Do all your characters play a clear and important role in your story?

Could two characters be combined as one?

Are your characters names unique?

Are there too many people in the first scene of your novel?

TIMELINE

Do all my events occur chronologically?

What time of year does this story take place and I have I reflected that via the weather and public holidays and/or events?

Do I lose or gain time in my manuscript?

BLOCKING

Are your characters where you need them to be?

Do you have too many people in your scene? Could there be less of them?

When writing a romance scene, have you remembered to check for CLAP?

SENSORY EDIT

Have you utilised more senses than just sight and basic sound in your writing?

Could your scene be enriched by using the power of scent and touch?

CHAPTER ENDINGS

Are your chapter endings either reminding the reader of the conflict, utilising strong voice, revealing new information, ending on a powerful word that lingers in the readers' mind, or utilising the cliffhanger technique?

THE FIRST FEW CHAPTERS

Have you introduced your protagonist and (potentially) your love interest?

Have you clearly established your goals?

Have you hinted at or established the conflict?

Have you got any large sections of back story you could either delete or share with the reader in a more effective manner?

DIALOGUE

Check that your dialogue sounds natural by eliminating those words 'in between'.

Are your characters conversing or monologue-ing?

Have you clearly indicated tone?

Is your character giving something away?

Have you given your protagonists their own language base?

Are your tags trying too hard?

Could you remove any dialogue tags?

Have you utilised the power of silence?

FILTER WORDS

Have you eliminated filters when possible to deepen the POV or left them in to highlight distance?

REPETITION

Have you repeated many words?

Do multiple sentences/paragraphs start or end with the same word in a row?

Could your sentence be made stronger using stylistic repetition?

CLICHES

Have you used clichés in your writing? Could you freshen these up?

GOING DEEPER AND GEEKING OUT

If you want to look into the power of assonance, alliteration, polysyndeton and asyndeton to really perfect your writing, there are a host of courses online that will help you take your writing to the next level.

FINAL CHECKS

Are your chapters numbered correctly?

Have you got any exclamation marks you don't need?

Have you performed a spell check on your book but carefully considered your changes?