


**EGADS,
I WROTE A BOOK**

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**IS IT REALLY THE
END AFTER YOU
TYPE “THE END”?**

OH, HECK NO.

IN THE BEGINNING— WHAT? TOO DRAMATIC?

Congratulations! Finishing a novel is amazing given time constraints from family, work, nosy neighbors borrowing your laptop for “research purposes,” etc. so I commend you for sticking through the soggy middles and coming out the other end only slightly frazzled.

But what do you do with the darn thing after you’ve high fived yourself for finishing?



GO OUTSIDE

OR CALL YOUR MOM, PLAY WITH YOUR CAT, STARE OFF INTO THE MIDDLE DISTANCE—DO WHATEVER YOU CAN TO TAKE A BREAK FROM YOUR LOVELY WORDS. YOUR NOVEL NEEDS TO PERCOLATE AND YOU NEED A SHOWER. GOOD GRAVY, MAN.

A SOLID 3-4 WEEKS AWAY FROM YOUR PROJECT WILL GIVE YOU THE PERSPECTIVE NEEDED TO DIVE INTO REVISIONS WITH RENEWED VIGOR AND FRESH EYES.

HAS IT BEEN A MONTH YET?

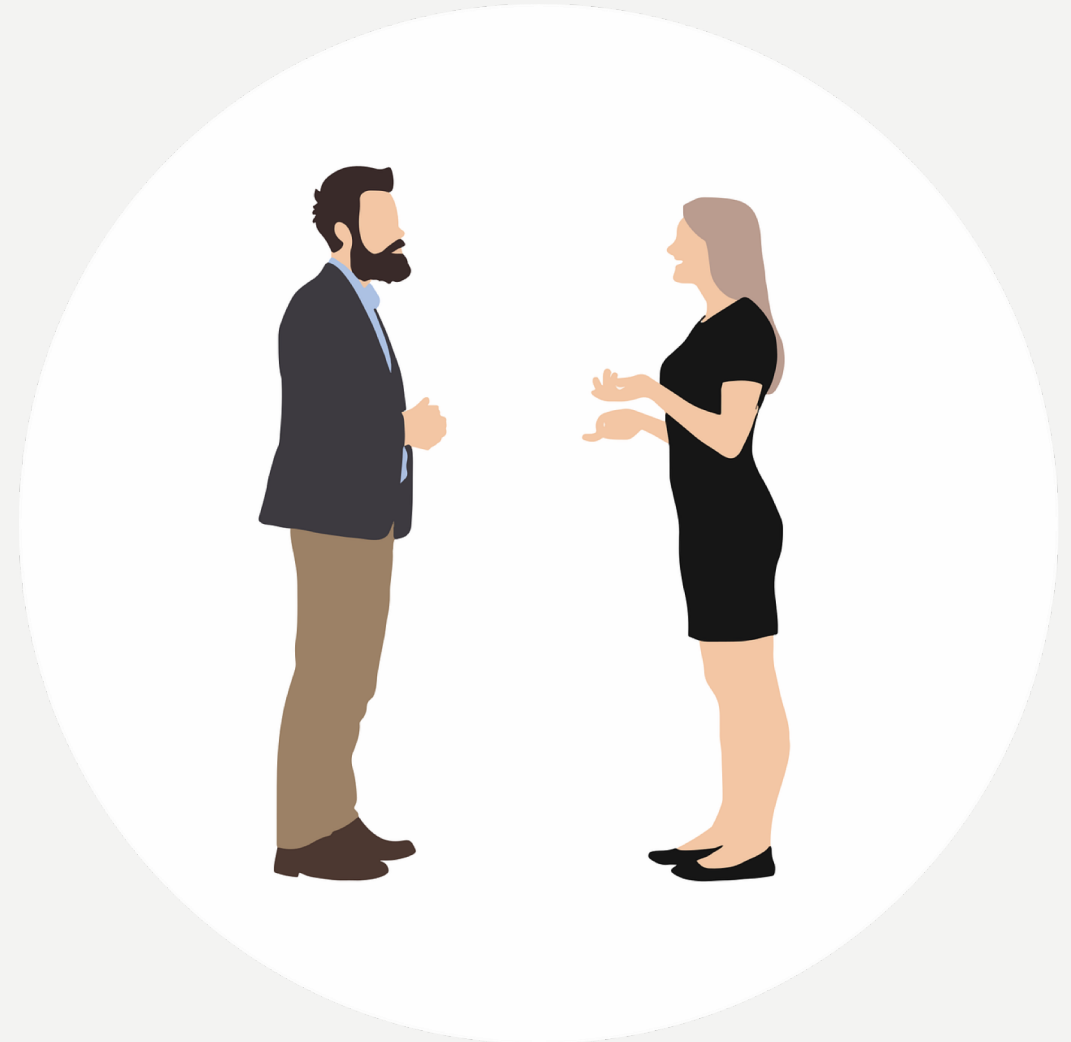
FIRST PASS

Now read the manuscript again. A no brainer, but this time take notes to fix bigger issues and see what it needs to give this baby some legs.

- Voice: Does each character stand on their own? Do they have a distinct character? Make sure they have their own wants and needs as well as quirks and foibles.
- Is it possible to combine minor characters into one to tighten the narrative?
- Conflict: The struggle *is* the story. What keeps your characters moving forward? What will they lose if they stop?
 - Are the main characters fighting others, a situation, a monster? Is the struggle believable enough that your readers will root for the hero?
 - Keep tension high to keep the plot moving.

FOREST MEET TREES

- Talking heads: A story needs action so make sure your characters aren't in a bubble. Oh, wait. Awkward.
- Plot holes: Flag anything that may have a character wander off without resolution.
- Characters don't have to be fun or likeable but they do need to have purpose: Will readers root for them or boo them? You need readers to have opinions. (Don't worry. They will.)



- Does the story fulfill the promise of the first five chapters throughout the rest of the manuscript?
- Does each character need to be there? Make them earn their spot. If they only show up for one scene, determine if they're needed as a plot device or if you can work that information in somewhere else.
- Grabbing a reader's (or agent's) attention can be tricky. Will your opening scene be memorable?

OPENING CHAPTERS

Does your story start off with a bang or ease the reader into a new world? Use action and description to keep the reader turning the pages in the vital first five chapters.

Have you kept the momentum going through this notoriously difficult area by strengthening your main characters focus on what they ultimately want?

- Add scenes: Will this get them closer to their goal? Who is helping them?
- Delete scenes: Do we really need another description of a sunset?

MIDDLE BIT

You should have a well-defined arc for each main character. Are they making their dreams come true?

- Does the ending wrap up all loose strings?
- Are all subplots resolved?
- Is the pacing en pointe throughout the manuscript? A slow start with a rushed ending makes no one happy.

SAUCY ENDING

Readers know when you've run out of steam by the end. Make sure to give yourself time and energy to pull the final chapter together. Push the villain off the cliff, kiss the love interest, or blow up the world, keep the thrill alive until the last sentence.

SECOND PASS

- Check POV.
 - Pro-tip: If something sounds off with the narrative, try changing it to another POV to see if that is more natural for the characters.
- Are you telling instead of showing? Those darn dialogue tags are cluttering up a perfectly good story. Move that description to action and give your characters a dance-off to get started.
 - Reminder: Remove all dance-off references in final draft. If you want to.
- Look for continuity issues such as seasons, day/night, someone slipped out a door and was never seen again.
- Use a Story Bible for major plot points or characteristics. That way your hero won't have moss green eyes in chapter three and melting pools of liquid gold in chapter twenty. Don't ask me how I am so familiar with this. That's not important here.
 - A Story Bible/separate notebook is a great tool to keep track of smaller (yet important) details of your project. Names, places, smells, eye color, place names can all be referenced while writing this book and beyond.



**READY TO GIVE
IT TO READERS?**

YOU BETTA BELIEVE IT.

FEEDBACK

Beta readers are a fabulous way to have strangers point out plot holes and make you wonder why you started writing in the first place. However, they are also a great way to gain perspective on a project that you've become close to.

No betas on hand? Try these places online:

Absolute Write Forums: <http://absolutewrite.com/forums>

Critique Circle: <https://www.critiquecircle.com/landing>

Pro-tip: Do not ask family or friends to be your betas. It just makes it weird at holidays.

Checklist for last revision pass

- ✓ Spelling
- ✓ Grammar
- ✓ Voice
- ✓ Pacing
- ✓ Filter words
- ✓ Body language: No one sighs *that* much
- ✓ Overused phrasing

FINAL PASS

Once you have received any notes from your readers and have incorporated them into your project (or not), it's time for a last revision check (repeat as often as necessary).

QUERY

AWESOME

- Three to four paragraphs
- Business partnership so keep letter professional and to the point
- Strong hook
- 250 words or less
- Keep query focused on:
 - Characters
 - Stakes
 - Conflict

NOT SO AWESOME

- Lost focus on project. If there is more about you than on the book, go back and revise
- Too long
- Synopsis instead of a query
- Bashing other authors, agents, or genres
- Questionable photos

PROPOSAL NONFICTION AND FICTION

- Overview: 1-2 pages briefly outlining the story or project.
- Author bio: Nonfiction writers, discuss your platform and why you are uniquely qualified to write this book. Fiction writers, share your writing credentials and portfolio.
- Market: 1-2 pages on who will buy this book and who will they recommend it to. Break it down to show you understand the market.
- Promotion: Where are the best places/people to talk to about this book? Bookstores, podcasts, universities, book festivals? Name and link them in this section.
- Comparable titles: 2-3 recent (within the last three years) titles of books similar to yours. Share how your book is different.
- Chapter summaries: Brief summaries of each...chapter. 🙄
- Sample chapters: 2-3 chapters plus introduction if needed.

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BEST OF LUCK!

Thank you!