

SIX STEPS TO A STORY

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1. THEME AND THINKING



Don't let writing scare you. If you can read this then you have enough skill to write. It's as easy and as fun as you want to make it. Adult writers use complicated words like theme, genre, characterization and plot. You don't need to learn those words or know what they mean to write a good story. Anyone can write a story. Even if you're the only one who ever reads it, if it makes you happy then it's worthwhile. It beats playing a video game because instead of having nothing to show for your time you'll have a story to call your own. You'll be an author.



Pick a subject to write about. What are you interested in? Martial arts? Dogs for the disabled? Rap music? Science fiction? Babysitting? Boys? If you think it's cool somebody else will, too.



Decide what kind of story it will be. Will it be funny? A mystery? An adventure? Science fiction? A sports story? Or do you just want to tell about stuff that happens at your house or at school? You'll probably want to write the same kind of story that you like to read.



Your story can be as short or as long as you want. The longer it is the more time it will take to write so it's a good idea to start with something shorter.



You can write in either the third person (he or she) or the first person (I) as long as you don't mix the two.

2. GET EXCITED!



Pretend your work is going to be published and compose the “blurb” for the back cover. Make people want to read your story. Design what the cover might look like. Draw pictures or look for some on the internet.



Find a piece of clipart that fits with your story and print it on some pieces of blank paper. Use them to write on. Or do the same thing with a stamp or stickers from the Dollar Store. Buy a cool pen or a notebook you'll enjoy using. Take it everywhere with you.



3. PLOT, PLACES, PEOPLE



What's going to happen in your story? Come up with a problem and figure out how your main character is going to solve it. Ask yourself “what if ...?” and see where different answers take you. What if I walked home from school a different way? What if that thing I heard on the news happened to me? What if we moved to another country? What if Mom got a job instead of staying home? What if I asked that girl nobody likes to be my friend? What if ...?



Do you want to know more about your subject? The internet and the library are great places to get info. Maybe a friend or a teacher or someone in your family knows more than you do. Talk to them.



Every story needs characters. How many do you need? Who are they? What are their names? Get to know them. What do they look like? How do they talk and feel and dress and think? Do you like them or dislike them? It's okay to do either.



Where will your story take place? Can you close your eyes and see the settings? Are there smells and sounds and colours? There should be. Try walking around in a place you might like to use in your story. Look and listen for interesting things to include to make your writing seem more real.

4. DO I NEED AN OUTLINE?



Yes. You do. Write down what happens in your story. Put each thing on it's own page and number the pages. This leaves lots of room to add stuff when you think of it. Go back after that and fill in who needs to be there, where it will take place, and any other ideas you have. When you think you're finished read your outline from the beginning all the way through to make sure you haven't forgotten anything and that it's in the right order.



Sentences or even paragraphs will come to you while you're stilling working on your outline. Write them down as quick as you can. If you don't, you'll forget.

5.

AUTHOR AT WORK!



The hard stuff is all done, now comes the fun. Start writing. Use a computer if you want to. Keep your outline in front of you and stay with it. If you get stuck on the first sentence, don't start at the beginning. Write something you feel excited about and go back later.



Remember, when someone else is reading your story, they won't be able to read your mind along with it. You'll have to explain things in enough detail so they can understand.



You can write anywhere, even on the bus or in the bathroom.



Brag to your friends or keep your story a secret, whichever feels best.



Keep your eyes and ears open. Everything that happens to you and around you can become part of your story and will make it seem more real. Read books, you'll get ideas from them, too.



Don't worry if your outline changes as you go along, all stories re-write themselves once they get going. Just keep writing, you can go back later and make the other parts fit in.



Writers often give their work to other people to proof read. It's a weird feeling, giving other people your story to read, kind of like sharing a part of yourself. All writers feel that way. Probably you'll give your story to your best friend or a family member and guess what? They love you so they're going to say they love your story, too. That's nice of them but you should ask them what you can do to make your story even better.



6. YOU ARE A SUPER HERO!



Once your story is finished, proof read it for the picky stuff. Are your sentences really sentences? Are they all the same length? Some should be shorter, some longer. If a different person is speaking did you start a new paragraph? Does the story flow along nicely or is it choppy? Fill in the gaps. Are you using the same word a lot? Find another one. Read your work out loud to yourself. Pay special attention to your first sentence. Does it make you want to keep reading? Put as much "who, what, when, where and why" into it as you can. Make changes. Tie up loose ends. Take as much time as you need. When you are in love with your story you're done.



Check the spelling of any words you're not sure of. Write the final draft neatly or do it on the computer and print it double spaced. A title page and a few pictures will make your story more impressive but correct spelling, punctuation and grammar will make the biggest difference of all.



You are a super hero! Have fun writing your next story.